

# COUPLE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP: WHEN THREESOMES MIGHT NOT BE SEXY

Hart, M<sup>1</sup> Tilley, M<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Curtin University

**Background:** The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of sexual expectations and experiences of fathers during pregnancy and up to two years following the birth of their child. Objectives of the research were to explore fathers' concerns about the impact of the pregnancy and birth on their sexual relationship, to explore if health professionals provided an opportunity for discussion about the couple's sexual relationship, and to investigate their experiences of health professionals during pregnancy and up to two years following the birth of their child.

**Methods:** The study was guided by descriptive phenomenology using thematic analysis.

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Participants were recruited to this project by purposive and snowball sampling methods.

**Results:** The transition to parenthood can be one of the most challenging stages of a man's life. It can present many unexpected challenges and changes to the couple's sexual relationship. The fathers expected some reduction in sexual intercourse during pregnancy and this was experienced. As anticipated, sexual intercourse ceased following the birth of the babies and it was slow to resume. They were disappointed with the lack of information received from health professionals throughout the perinatal period, especially with regards to breastfeeding and possible sexual relationship changes.

**Conclusion:** This research aims to add to the scant information on fathers and their sexual relationships during pregnancy and in the postnatal period and to alert health professionals to utilise the valuable opportunity they have to engage with fathers and assist them to make the change to parenthood as uneventful as possible.