



## The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children's Mental Health

Results from a research study funded by the Australian Rotary Health (ARH) examined around 1,000 families to understand the origins of childhood mental health disorders. The study took place before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing how the mental health of children was affected.

Associate Professor, [Dr Delyse Hutchinson](#), from Deakin University received a mental health research grant between 2018 and 2021 to conduct an 8-year follow-up (middle childhood assessment) in their longitudinal Triple B Pregnancy Cohort Study (Triple B). The Triple B commenced in 2010 and has followed parents and their offspring from pregnancy, through to the first year of infancy and then recently 8 years later.



Dr Hutchinson details how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted the families they interviewed; in particular, the mixed changes in children's behaviour and emotional development relative to pre-pandemic levels.

Following the commencement of social restrictions in March 2020, the proportion of children that demonstrated normal levels of emotion regulation and good peer relationships did not change. However, in categories of hyperactivity and pro-social behaviour, fewer children scored within the normal range, compared to pre-pandemic levels. Such that more children demonstrated high levels of hyperactivity and abnormal levels of pro-social behaviour compared to pre-pandemic levels.

"Our middle childhood assessment occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia," said Dr Hutchinson, "providing a unique opportunity to examine the mental health and wellbeing of families during the pandemic."

"Results from this data will also be valuable in understanding how we can promote resilience in parents and children during future crises."

The evidence gathered by Dr Hutchinson and her team suggest that whilst many children have been relatively resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia, some children have experienced poorer psychosocial adjustment during this period of increased stress for many families.

A numerous number of scientific articles using the data from Dr Hutchinson's middle childhood assessment are expected to be published in the coming years.

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