

The Evening Herald – Saturday 11 September 2010

Study aims to deliver for our first-time dads:

By Fiona Dillon

New Irish research will help first-time dads to enjoy the experience more. And while new fathers such as Ireland hero Robbie Keane make the headlines, men are often forgotten in the area of early parenting.

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The research into men's experiences -- good and bad -- is being supported with funding from the Health Research Board (HRB).

And the wide-ranging study is expected to "inform clinical practice on how first-time dads can be supported effectively".

Antenatal

The HRB, which has announced a new €26m investment programme in health research, has provided details of projects it is supporting, in its latest round of funding.

Under the new project into first-time dads, a first interview is being conducted in the antenatal period when their partner is pregnant from 16 weeks onwards.

The second interview will be carried out six weeks after the birth and the third interview will be conducted four months after the baby is born.

The interviews will explore each man's experiences of pregnancy, birth and the early fatherhood period and in doing so will provide information on men's experiences of their interactions with caregivers as well as their experiences in becoming a father.

The findings will be discussed with groups responsible for delivering maternity care and those involved in developing policy relating to maternity care in Ireland with the aim of achieving further improvements through policy changes.

The HRB revealed that it is one of a range of projects it is supporting in its latest round of funding.

The €26m investment programme includes a total of €13.2m that has been allocated for research projects which will start this year, and €12.6m that researchers can apply for in 2010, but which won't be allocated until 2011.

Meanwhile, a separate research project being supported by the HRB in this round of funding will look at the identification of new therapeutic options for patients with chronic lung disease.

And another will look at the potential development of a non-antibiotic treatment for rosacea, a red facial skin disease, which is very common in the Irish population.

Balance

Meanwhile, the HRB will also support a research project on rehabilitation advice for physiotherapists on how inner-ear problems can affect walking and balance.

Health Minister Mary Harney, who announced the funding at the new Convention Centre in Dublin, said that the funding will support jobs, create training opportunities as well as developing career paths for 80 highly skilled people in the health sector.

Fiona Dillon