

Supporting Families in recovery when Parents have Mental Illness: *Personal & professional perspectives*



Professor Kim Foster
Faculty of Health, Disciplines of Nursing & Midwifery



**UNIVERSITY OF
CANBERRA**

Empathy, resilience, strength, awareness

‘...all of us, regardless of our life circumstances, need to develop coping strategies such as resilience and the ability to adapt to change, in order to maintain good mental health’

Mental Health Council of Australia (2000)



Personal as political - forgotten families

- Lack of identification, support & information
- Fractured family structures & connections
- Intergenerational impacts
 - Mental distress, stigma, trauma, loss & grief
 - Resilience & recovery

A major public health issue

- 23% Australian children have at least one parent with mental illness¹
- 41-77% risk of developing MI²
- Children with PSMI: 32% risk SMI , 55% risk any mental illness³

¹Maybery, D., Reupert, A., Patrick, K., Goodyear, M. & Crase, L. (2009). Parental mental illness in Australian families. *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 33, 26-29.

²Hosman, C.M.H., van Doesum, K. & van Santvoort. (2009). Prevention of emotional problems & psychiatric risks in children of parents with a mental illness in the Netherlands: I. The scientific basis to a comprehensive approach. *Australian e-journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 8(3).

³Rasic, D., Hajek, T. , Alda, M. & Uher, R. (2014). Risk of mental illness in offspring of parents with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depressive disorder: a meta-analysis of family high-risk studies. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 40(1), 28-38).

Complex causal pathways

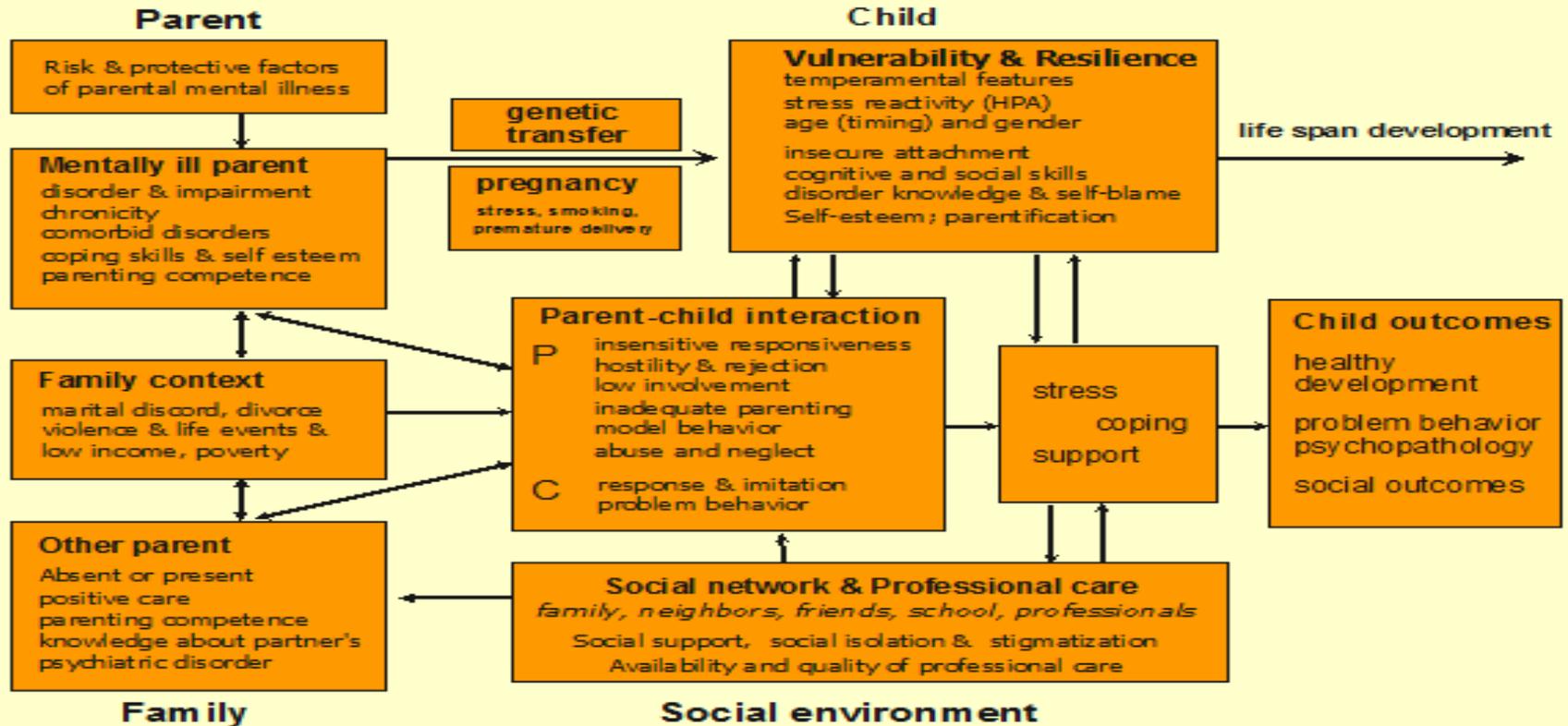


Figure 1. A Developmental Model of Transgenerational Transmission of Psychopathology (Hosman et al, 2009)

Intergenerational mental illness & trauma – a wicked problem?



Professional perspectives...

Winston Churchill Fellowship: US, Canada, Netherlands

<http://www.churchilltrust.com.au/fellows/detail/3546/kim+foster>





Vancouver



Halifax



Boston



Deventer



Sydney

- People as parents first
- Prevention by definition = building resilience
- Interventions with population-level impact (eg. schools, health, primary health care)
- Policy needs to support families not individuals



- Partnering together – Family Options program (Family Recovery)
- Promoting parental MH -> +ve impact on all family members
- Family-centred, strengths-based, trauma-informed, recovery & resilience focused



An Australian perspective

- National mental health policy & National COPMI Initiative
- Information, resources & workforce training
- Family-focused practices & recovery
- Victorian FaPMI network
- Victorian MH Act 2014

The screenshot shows the COPMI website interface. At the top, the URL <http://www.copmi.net.au> is visible. The COPMI logo, featuring green hands and the tagline "Keeping families in mind", is on the left. A search bar and social media icons (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) are on the right. A horizontal navigation menu includes: Home, Parents & Families, Kids & Teens/Young Adults, Professionals, Get Help, Get Info, Get Involved, and Research. Below the menu, there are several content tiles: a "FAMILY FOCUS DVD" tile with a child's face and text about depression; a "NEW E-LEARNING COURSE" section with vertical labels for "DAD'S STUFF...", "KIDS & TEENS STUFF...", and "ANTHONY FIELD'S TIPS..."; a "Need to talk urgently?" box listing "Lifeline Australia 13 11 14", "MensLine 1300 78 99 78", and "Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800"; three image-based tiles for "Parents & Families", "Kids & Youth/Young Adults", and "Professionals"; a "Dads" tile with a couple's photo; and an "eLearning" tile with a "Login here" button and a "Learning" keyboard key graphic. A footer navigation bar at the bottom repeats the main categories: Parents & Families, Kids & Teens/Young Adults, Professionals, and Get Help.



Prevention is effective – parenting as primary

Up to 40% reduction in child risks
with preventive family interventions

(Siegenthaler et al., 2012)



**‘a recovery approach is a crucial element of family-centred practice.
Indeed, parental functioning can be intimately related to
the recovery process’.**

(Trowse, Hawkins, Clark, 2013)

Tasks for families in recovery



Maintaining hope



Reconnecting



Overcoming secondary trauma



Journeying from carer to family

'you're not always alone and...you will find your way out of it, like it's a big dark cave and there's two roads.

There's one road to hide your feelings but another road leads to an opening and that's what I've learnt ...

it practically tells you what path to choose.

It's not saying "oh choose the one on the right", it's just saying "that way leads to a better ending but on the left one you'll just live in a deep dark house"



(John, 11 yrs, in Foster et al., 2014)