

Determining the experiences, emotional wellbeing, and unmet needs of parents of injured children aged 0-12 years throughout the trauma journey

Investigators: Professor Kim Foster, Professor Kate Curtis, Associate Professor Rebecca Mitchell, Dr Alexandra Young, Dr Connie Van

Funding source: [Day of Difference Foundation](#)

Status: Complete, full list of publications available below.



Synopsis

This study investigated the experience of parents when dealing with a child suffering from a traumatic physical injury.

This longitudinal phase of the research program involved interviewing 40 parents of severely injured children aged 0-12 years to understand their perspectives on their child's injury and the care they received, and to determine what aspects of care they felt improved their experience within the first 2 years post injury. Information was also collected on parents' emotional wellbeing and quality of life.

The parents were interviewed after their child's initial hospitalisation and then again at 6 months, 1 year and 2 years post-injury, to gain more nuanced and detailed data about parental experiences over time. Twenty-two parents were retained from the original 40 over the four time points. The primary aim of this study was to highlight potential periods of vulnerability for families and to track their emotional wellbeing over time. The study:

- Explored both mothers' and fathers' experiences, to delineate how best to meet the unique needs of parents affected by the child's injury.
- Explored the parents' and families' unmet support needs, such as information and practical needs.
- Elicited parent suggestions for improvements in service availability.
- Measured parental levels of emotional distress (anxiety, depression and stress), resilience, and quality of life using standardised measures.

The accounts from [Emma](#) and [John](#), assist to provide some insight into the experiences and emotions of parents when their child is seriously injured. *(Details are de-identified)*

Publications

Foster K., Van C., McCloughen A., Mitchell R., Young A. & Curtis K. (2020) Parent perspectives and psychological needs 2 years following child critical injury: A qualitative inquiry. *Injury*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.injury.2020.01.017>

Foster K., Mitchell R., Van C., Young A., McCloughen A., & Curtis K. (2019) Resilient, recovering, distressed: a longitudinal qualitative study of parent psychosocial trajectories following child critical injury. *Injury*, 50(10), 1605-1611. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.injury.2019.05.003>

Foster K., Mitchell R., Young A., Van C. & Curtis K. (2019). Parent experiences and psychosocial support needs 6 months following paediatric critical injury: A qualitative study. *Injury*, 50(5), 1082-1088. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.injury.2019.01.004>

Foster K., Mitchell R., Young A., Van C., & Curtis K. (2018). Resilience-promoting factors for parents of severely injured children during the acute hospitalisation period: A qualitative inquiry. *Injury*, 50(5), 1075-1081. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.injury.2018.12.011>

Wiseman T., Foster K., Young A., Van C., & Curtis K. (2018) 'It's turned our world upside down': Support needs of parents of critically injured children during ED admission - a qualitative inquiry. *Australasian Emergency Care*, 21(4), 137-142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.auec.2018.09.002>

Foster K., Young A., Mitchell R., Van C., & Curtis K. (2017) Experiences and needs of parents of critically injured children during the acute hospital phase: A qualitative investigation. *Injury*, 48(1): 114-120
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.injury.2016.09.034>

Foster K., Curtis K., Mitchell R., Van C., & Young A. (2016). The experiences, unmet needs and outcomes of parents of severely injured children: a longitudinal mixed methods study protocol. *BMC pediatrics*, 16(1), 152.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-016-0693-8>