

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Can Pregnancy Really Affect a Woman's Memory and Attention?



The findings of a cross sectional study investigating whether memory and attention are compromised during the first and third trimesters of pregnancy compared to a matched and control group of non pregnant women will be presented today at the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) 2009 Annual Scientific Meeting.

'Popular stereotypes exist of pregnant women who lack concentration or who are forgetful. Few formal prospective studies have analysed this using objective neuropsychological tests', said Dr Lenore Ellett today.

Formal validated neuro-psychology tests were carried out on 30 women in the first trimester, 30 women in the third trimester and 30 non pregnant women. There were no significant differences in the demographics between the groups.

'Compared to non pregnant controls, women in the third trimester performed worse in measurements of auditory memory. The mean index score for combined memory measurements was ten points lower in pregnant women compared to non pregnant controls', said Dr Ellett.

'Amongst this group of pregnant women IQ was found to fall into a high average subset. However, their memory scores fell into the average range. No change was found in measurements of visuospatial memory.

'The study demonstrates that pregnant women do have poorer memory function than non pregnant women, particularly with regards to auditory memory.

'This is important given that information given to pregnant women is usually verbal. Visual memory was not statistically different between the two groups.

'Clinicians need to be aware that information given orally to pregnant women may not be retained as well as written information', said Dr Ellett.

Over 900 health professionals from around the world are expected to attend the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) 2009 Annual Scientific Meeting. The meeting is held in conjunction with the XXIst Asian and Oceanic Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (AOCOG 2009) in Auckland, New Zealand, at the Sky City Convention Centre from today, Thursday 26 March until Monday 30 March 2009.

**For further information, media arrangements or to obtain an available abstract, contact:**

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**A copy of the meeting program: [www.aocogranzcoq2009.co.nz/](http://www.aocogranzcoq2009.co.nz/)**

