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Peri/Post-natal Depression and How to Help

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Postpartum depression

“Not just the baby blues”

- Presence of depressive symptoms for >2 weeks following childbirth
 - Can occur anytime within the first year after childbirth
- Specific symptoms related to new moms include
 - Feeling disconnected to her baby
 - Feeling unable to care or love her baby
 - Related anxiety regarding adequately caring for her baby



- Can be related to major hormonal swings during/after pregnancy
- Other risk factors include: pre-existing mental health conditions, fatigue of child care, lack of support systems, unplanned pregnancy

How does this impact our community?

- According to the VT DOH in 2019, 1 out of 5 pregnant or postpartum women suffered from depression or anxiety during the perinatal period
 - Compared to the national rate of 1 out of 8 as announced by the CDC that same year
- In 2017, the estimated cost of perinatal mood/anxiety disorders in the US was approximately \$14.2 billion following both mother and child up to 5-years postpartum
- Within the last year, the Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Consultation Service at UVM has serviced over 200 clients and consulted on at least 100 cases within VT
- Using the screening tool in place at UVMHC, at least 14% of patients coming in for their prenatal visits typically screen positive for depression or other mood disorders

The Community Perspective

Interviews were conducted within the community with providers and specialists who work directly with patients who may be dealing with the effects of peri/postpartum depression

- Clara Keegan MD (South Burlington Family Medicine) expressed that some some women may not know that they need extra support to deal with changes in their mood during the peri/post natal period, much less that these resources exist
- There may also be a gap in helping women who are too scared or embarrassed to admit to their provider that they are struggling, and would benefit from having the information and resource material given to them to review on their own.
- Sandra Wood APRN (Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Consultation service) expressed that within the state of Vermont, mental health/child family services are established differently depending on the specific county, and so navigating the resources available in one particular area may be a challenge to pursue individually.
- It is also important to recognize that supporting women with postnatal depression can also take the form of access to food, childcare, sheltering, IPV resources, etc. It is not exclusive to mental health

Intervention and Methodology

- Presently, the primary obstetric providers at South Burlington Family Medicine provide an extensive information packet for mothers coming in for their initial prenatal visit including information related to visit schedules, upcoming tests, diet, lifestyle changes, etc.
- While mood disorders of pregnancy are typically screened for at routine visits both peri- and postnatally, I think our patients would benefit from receiving information about it as early as their initial prenatal visit. It can also be re-addressed at their postpartum follow up
- Information will include
 - Definition of postpartum depression
 - Signs and symptoms to watch for and how partners/other support systems can also monitor for them
 - Community resources that are available and how to access them

Results of the project

Where do I go if I need help?

Listed below are some resources within Vermont that address needs of mothers experiencing peri- or postpartum depression

- Text VT to 741741 will put you in touch with the Crisis text line
- The Mental Health Team located within South Burlington Family Medicine Office
- The Janet S. Munt Family Room offering programs for postpartum support and activities for young children and their families
 - <https://www.thefamilyroomvt.org/>
- Assistance with referrals to therapists and other supports
 - <https://www.helpmegrowvt.org/>
- The VT chapter of Postpartum Support International
 - <https://psichapters.com/vt/>
- WIC Vermont to assist with nutritional and food support for children
 - <https://www.healthvermont.gov/family/wic>
- The Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Consultation Services and UVMCC
 - http://contentmanager.med.uvm.edu/docs/perinatal_mood_anxiety_consultation_flyer_wood_final_90115/vchip-documents/perinatal_mood_anxiety_consultation_flyer_wood_final_90115.pdf?sfrsn=2

A short list of the local* community resources that provide support for new mothers and families with services including

Direct mental health support
Referrals to other resources
Support groups for new mothers/caregivers
Access to food for families in need

...and more

*Because this information sheet was specifically designed for addition to the South Burlington Family Medicine Practice, the resources listed are geographically centered within Vermont/Chittenden County.

Effectiveness and Limitations

- The hope is that implementation of this information in the initial prenatal handout will maximize understanding and recognition of peri/postnatal depression so that supports can be put in place as early as possible
- An ideal outcome would be to see an uptrend in the amount of patients reaching out to both providers and other community resources in order to identify their specific needs, keeping in mind that every patient is different in the way they manifest their depression and the strategies needing to be implemented in order to best assist them
- A possible way to assess the effectiveness of this project would be to have the services listed on the information sheet administer a survey asking participants how they heard of their programs
- One limitation of this project is language/cultural barriers. At this point in time the information would only be available in English and would require additional work to translate to major languages. There is also a lack in resources that cater specifically to underrepresented populations or those with more specific cultural

Where do we go from here?

Future directions regarding this project and this topic may involve investigation into the more far-reaching impacts of mood disorders related to pregnancy. Including but not limited to...

- Prevalence and morbidity of postpartum depressive symptoms in partners or other caregivers
- Investigation into parenting styles in those affected by postpartum depression
- How does postpartum depression affect perspectives on having future children?

Further investigation may also be warranted in evaluating patient perspectives on the existing resources that are available to mothers dealing with postpartum depression. Including but not limited to

- Gaps in care or resources
- Limitations to receiving care for postpartum depression
- The effectiveness of therapy and other modalities of counseling that may be more beneficial

References

- <https://www.womenshealth.gov/mental-health/mental-health-conditions/postpartum-depression>
- <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/postpartum-depression>
- https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/CYF_PMADs%20Fact%20Sheet..pdf
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