



The Other Side Of Motherhood

Archit Garg*, Aashi Garg

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Sadiq Road, Faridkot, Punjab, India

*Corresponding Author:

Archit Garg

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Sadiq Road, Faridkot, Punjab, India

Type of Publication: Original Research Paper

Conflicts of Interest: Nil

Abstract

Depression among pregnant women has been prevalent for a long time and is a prime example of the iceberg phenomenon where the number of reported cases is far less than the actual number. Despite widespread efforts and advances made in the mental health field, maternal mental health is still an area that hasn't been given due attention. Not only does postpartum depression significantly affect the mother's health and her ability to nurture the child but also affects the mother-child bonding. Early diagnosis and timely treatment of postpartum depression thus become important. In this article, we suggest some measures which may help in tackling the problem of postpartum depression which will further aid in improving maternal health and quality of life. Furthermore, this will ensure better mother-child bonding and child development.

Keywords: Postpartum depression, Edinburg Postnatal Depression Scale, maternal health

Introduction

Recently we came across an article regarding the rising cases of depression during pregnancy and the postpartum period in the Covid pandemic. [1]

Even though nowadays there is a lot of talk around depression but still there is a lack of knowledge amongst the public when it comes to maternal depression. This is evident by the fact that since the launch of the National Mental Health Programme in 1982, maternal health is still not an important component. The incidence of maternal depression is very high in India. One systemic review and metanalysis done by Upadhyay et al showed that the prevalence of postpartum depression among Indian mothers was 22%. [2] And these are only the recorded cases. There are a large number of cases that go unrecorded.

In our opinion, since pregnancy is generally associated with happy emotions, this section of the population gets overlooked when it comes to mental health problems. This might also be the reason that sometimes patients themselves can't understand that

they might be suffering from partum or postpartum depression.

Early diagnosis and treatment of postpartum depression are very important as maternal depression affects the mother's capability to take care and nurture the child, hampering the cognitive and behavioral development of the child. It affects the mother's breastfeeding ability leading to poor physical development, low weight, high risk of antisocial behavior, and emotional instability among the children. [3]

During this time the mother may not feel emotionally attached to the child, may not be able to experience the motherly love that a new mother feels for which she might hold herself guilty which has a deteriorating effect on their mental health. Moreover, it also impedes the mother-child bonding. So, in this article, we suggest a few measures which can help overcome this barrier.

1) The first measure is counseling pregnant females regarding depression during pregnancy as well as postpartum period. As it has been rightly pointed out,

'The eyes can see only what the mind knows' so to seek help in cases of postpartum depression or depression during pregnancy one must be aware of its likelihood and how it presents itself.

The antenatal checkups must include a counseling session where the mother is told regarding the symptoms of maternal depression, its occurrence in motherhood, its treatment, and prognosis. These counseling sessions should not only involve the mother but her family with whom she lives during as well as after the course of pregnancy. This is important because most of the times depression is diagnosed by a family member. By doing something as simple as involving a talk about depression in antenatal visits, we will be able to increase the likelihood of identification of maternal depression and the probability that these patients will seek help.

2) To our amazement, in our five and a half years of medical school we haven't heard much about maternal depression. Neither have we seen pregnant females or new mothers and their families being told about the same. Even though depression is discussed in detail, the possibility that pregnant and post pregnancy females might also suffer from the same is paid less heed. Generally, the center of these discussions is children, adolescents, people with a troubled childhood, victims of rape, domestic violence, or individuals with traumatic pasts.

The first time we came to know about postpartum depression was through a short film. This movie, "New Born Mother", first acquainted us with postpartum depression. It gives useful insight into postpartum depression and is easy to understand even for the masses.[4]

So, it shows that mass media, such as television advertisements, short films, radio talk shows, podcasts, etc. plays an important role in spreading awareness regarding important themes such as postpartum depression in this case.

The main idea is that people need be aware that depression can also occur during pregnancy or even after childbirth. It is not taboo and if identified on time it can save the lives of both, the children as well as the mother.

3) Edinburg Postnatal Depression Scale is a widely used parameter to screen postpartum depression with high sensitivity and specificity (sensitivity of 85%

and 84% and specificity of 66% and 95% depending on the cut off of 10 or higher and 13 or higher respectively) and can easily be done too. [5] A study conducted in India showed that the Hindi version of this scale is also very effective. [6] The metanalysis by Upadhyay et al also showed that studies using Edinburg postnatal depression scale reported a greater postnatal depression prevalence as compared to studies that used other instruments (24% in the former as compared to 17% in the latter).^[2] Since the Edinburg Postnatal Depression Scale is in questionnaire form, it can be done easily by the healthcare practitioners during the initial postpartum periods and help in early diagnosis and timely treatment. As evident from the studies, this scale is effective and serves the purpose so it can be used more often and on a larger scale in both rural and urban healthcare setups.

4) One of the most important aspects of patient-centered health care administration is to provide health facilities to the people in a way that is convenient and easily accessible. Since the newborns are usually accompanied to the vaccination center by their mothers, the doctors present there can talk to the mother to look for signs of postpartum depression and may use screening parameters like the Edinburg postnatal depression scale. This will ensure appropriate screening of the postpartum mothers and helps in early detection and timely intervention. There can be a small counseling session for the new mothers along with their family who comes along to get the newborn vaccinated regarding the signs and symptoms of postpartum depression and the importance of providing emotional support to the mother.

These are some of the steps which can be undertaken to timely diagnose and spread awareness regarding postpartum depression.

References

1. Jungari S. Maternal mental health in India during COVID-19. Public Health. 2020 Aug;185:97.
2. Upadhyay RP, Chowdhury R, Salehi A, Sarkar K, Singh SK, Sinha B, Pawar A, Rajalakshmi AK, Kumar A. Postpartum depression in India: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Bulletin of the World Health Organization. 2017 Oct 1;95(10):706.

3. The World Health Report 2005. Make Every Mother and Child Count. Chapter. 4. Attending to 136 Million Births, Every Year. p. 61-77. Available from: <http://www.who.int/whr/2005/chap4-en.pdf>.
4. New Born Mother || ft. Karan Wahi & Pooja Gor || Mother's Day Special ||. Youtube, Net Pix Shorts. 2019 May 10; Available from: <https://youtu.be/UFLR8vW3iGw>
5. Levis B, Negeri Z, Sun Y, Benedetti A, Thombs BD. Accuracy of the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) for screening to detect major depression among pregnant and postpartum women: systematic review and meta-analysis of individual participant data. *bmj*. 2020 Nov 11;371.
6. Joshi U, Lyngdoh T, Shidhaye R. Validation of Hindi version of Edinburgh postnatal depression scale as a screening tool for antenatal depression. *Asian journal of psychiatry*. 2020 Feb 1;48:101919.