

Severity and Associated Risk Factors Leading to Depressive Symptoms in the Post Partum Period: A Cross Sectional Study in a Tertiary Care Hospital

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Background

Depression significantly contributes to the global disease burden. It is important to identify maternal depression in India since death rates due to suicide, a large proportion of which occur in women, are among the highest in the world here. Post partum depression has also been shown to have negative effects on the overall development of the infant. Several studies have been done on the prevalence of and risk factors leading to post partum depression, but there is still scarcity of data in our local context. There is also no standardised objective method, included in our routine post natal checks, to assess depressive symptoms. It is therefore important to study these symptoms in our hospital, it being one of the largest in India. Based on the DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders) criteria, post partum depression falls under the diagnostic criteria for Major Depressive Episode with postpartum onset. It states that symptoms must begin within four weeks of delivery, last a minimum of two weeks and cause clinically significant impairment in daily functioning.

Aims & Objectives

To assess the severity of depressive symptoms in mothers, 6-8 weeks after delivery and to identify risk factors leading to these depressive symptoms.

Material & Methods

The cross-sectional study was planned at a tertiary care hospital in New Delhi. The study universe included women visiting the immunisation centre. The inclusion criterion was women who had delivered a live child 6-8 weeks before the interview. The exclusion criteria were those coming before 6 weeks post partum, women who

had been previously diagnosed with PPD, and those whose children had died at birth or in the period before being interviewed. The sampling technique used was non probability sampling and the sample size was N=106. The study tools used were the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale, Beck's Depression Inventory (Hindi) and a Structured Performa. The study period was April to July 2013.

Results

According to Beck's Depressive Inventory II, 45% of the ladies interviewed had depressive symptoms ranging from mild to very severe. Mild depression (score of 11-16) was seen in 19.8 %, borderline (score of 17-20) in 8.4 %, moderate (score 21-30) in 9.4 %, severe (score 31-40) in 5.7 % and very severe (score >40) in 1.9 %. According to EPDS, 32% of them had possible depression (>10 score on EPDS). Suicidal ideation was present in 19.8% of those interviewed (Q 10 EPDS). Those who showed depressive symptoms with daily dysfunction and were willing for treatment, were referred to the Department of Psychiatry. Occupation and educational status of the lady, female gender of the baby, low socioeconomic status, poor role in decision making and absence of any hobbies were significantly associated with development of depressive symptoms in the post partum period.

Conclusions

Depressive symptoms are found to occur commonly in women, 6-8 weeks post partum. Identification and prompt treatment of these symptoms can significantly reduce harmful effects on the mother, her child and her family. Government policies should also be made to reduce gender bias, domestic violence and to encourage familial support during pregnancy.