

Paternal Postnatal Depression- Sad Dad Syndrome

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Abstract

Fatherhood is a unique and joyful experience. Nevertheless, it might trigger stress and negative feelings that lead to depression in fathers especially the fathers of first child born to them [1]. When the first baby is born, Naturally it is the time to be happy, but some fathers may not feel that way, instead they feel confused or even sad.¹ The depression state which develops among fathers after the birth of the first child is also termed as "sad dad syndrome or postnatal depression in fathers". Postpartum depression, once expected only in new mothers, is now estimated to occur in 25% of new fathers as well. Employment status, history of psychiatric treatment, and unintended pregnancy, relationship problems, Added financial pressures, feeling of isolation, Alteration in lifestyle and lack of support from family members and friends, Changes in marital relationship, physical health problems, Lack of wife's attention, added financial burden or a job loss, Enhanced domestic workload, Lack of sound sleep are common causes for depression in father. Common symptoms of paternal depression includes Perceiving future in a miserable bleak way and worrying too much about the future, poor concentration, Feeling sad, isolated, anxious, feeling of guilt, Becoming irritated, hostile and aggressive, no interest in sex, performing poorly at work, loss of energy, lack of interest in usual activities, irritability, anxiety, sleep disturbances playing less with their babies.

Keywords: Postnatal Depression; Postpartum Depression; Maternal Depression; Syndrome.

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Introduction

Fatherhood is a unique and joyful experience. Nevertheless, it might trigger stress and negative feelings that lead to depression in fathers especially the fathers of first child born to them [1]. When the first baby is born, naturally it is the time to be happy, but some fathers may not feel that way, instead they feel confused or even sad [1]. The depression state which develops among fathers after the birth of the first child is also termed as 'sad dad syndrome or postnatal depression in fathers'. Postpartum depression, once expected only in new mothers, is now estimated to occur in 25% of new fathers as well. Paternal postpartum depression can be difficult to assess. New fathers may seem more angry and anxious than sad. And yet, depression is present. Maternal depression is associated with many hormonal and biochemical changes that are directly related to child birth. As the child bearers, women have been the primary focus for studies of physiological and psychological changes during and after pregnancy. But Fathers who are not directly susceptible to child birth-related biochemical or hormonal changes are subject to psychosocial stressors and develops depression. Depressed father may not involve in caring the baby as a normal father, which in turn develop negative consequence in babies' psychological development. More recent literature has begun to uncover changes in dads as well. A few studies have found hormonal changes in men about to become fathers [2].

The term depression is so commonly used in day to day life that it fails to convince the people around that depression could be a disease in itself [2]. The World Health Organization has identified depression as the number one psychiatric cause of disability in the world and projected that it would rank second in the world as a cause of disability by 2020 [3]. An analysis of

previous research has revealed that about 10 percent of fathers experience prenatal or postpartum depression, with rates being highest in the 3 to 6 month postpartum period [4]. This preponderance has led to the consideration of depression by some researchers as 'the common cold of psychiatric disorders' [5]. Unfortunately, only one third of all people with depression seeks help, are accurately diagnosed, and obtain appropriate treatment [3]. Postpartum depression in men is a significant and recent emerging issue in the field of Psychiatric Nursing. Much attention has been paid to the maternal depression. However, men also experience depression after the birth of a child, and that paternal depression are linked to maternal depression. Maternal depression was identified as the strongest predictor of paternal depression during the postpartum period [6].

Cause of Paternal Depression

The true cause of paternal depression is still unknown. Depression in general is generated by stressful and emotional situations and the birth of baby can also be a demanding experience for the new parents. Fatherhood pressure and related responsibilities increase the stress to develop depression. First time dads who are not economically too sound are susceptible to experience Paternal Postnatal Depression. Employment status, history of psychiatric treatment, and unintended pregnancy, relationship problems, added financial pressures, feeling of isolation, alteration in lifestyle and lack of support from family members and friends, changes in marital relationship, physical health problems, lack of wife's attention, added financial burden or a job loss, Enhanced domestic workload, lack of sound sleep are common causes for depression in father. One of the important factors is, partner's (mother of the baby) depression. Besides these, father's own social factors, personality, family history and previous 'mental health' history are also important in affecting his chances of getting depression. The most common correlate of paternal depressive symptoms pre- and post birth was having a partner with elevated depressive symptoms or depression; Poor relationship satisfaction was also frequently associated with depression in men. The scientific study of predictors of men's depressive symptoms pre and post birth remains in its infancy [7]. Biological point of view, low level of testosterone, cortisol, estrogen hormone which decreases after the child birth may cause depression in men.

Symptoms

It can be defined as a type of depression noticed

slowly or suddenly with symptoms ranging from mild to severe. Common symptoms of paternal depression include perceiving future in a miserable bleak way and worrying too much about the future, poor concentration, feeling sad, isolated, anxious, feeling of guilt, becoming irritated, hostile and aggressive, no interest in sex, performing poorly at work, loss of energy, lack of interest in usual activities, irritability, anxiety, sleep disturbances and Playing less with their babies.

Effect of Paternal Depression

When left untreated, paternal postpartum depression limits men's capacity to provide emotional support to their partners and children. Research conducted by University of Oxford psychiatrist Paul Ramchandani, found that kids whose fathers had been depressed in both the prenatal stage and the first month of infancy "had the highest risk of subsequent psychopathology." And the effect was especially strong in boys who had had depressed fathers [7]. An infant's development is more severely disrupted when both parents are depressed than when only one parent is depressed [8]. An infant's heightened levels of the stress hormone cortisol resulting from unresponsive or chaotic parenting, can hamper normal brain growth and self-regulatory ability in the early life [9]. If primary care giver & do not support child development it may affect adversely on cognitive and emotional development of the child. Depressed father often avoids playing and caring for the child, which ultimately leads to the development of insecure attachments. This, in turn, may cause psychopathology for many psychiatric disorders such as conduct problems or hyperactivity in future. Paternal major depression was associated with lower psychosocial functioning, elevated suicidal ideation and attempt rates in sons in young adulthood, and depression in daughters [10]. In case of psychotic symptoms along with severe depression, father may cause harm, maltreatment and even infanticide.

Diagnosis of Paternal Depression

There is not yet one single official set of diagnostic criteria for paternal postpartum depression. The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) has been validated and used extensively in screening for depression in new mothers, both in English speaking and non-English speaking communities [11]. While some studies have reported the use of the EPDS with fathers, none have validated it for this group.

According to the epidemiological studies, one in 10 new fathers experience prenatal or postpartum

depression, a condition long thought to affect only mothers. The men are at highest risk for depression three to six months after the birth of a child, and their depression often corresponds with depression in the mother. It was found that prenatal and postpartum depression was evident in about 10% of men. New fathers were generally happiest during the early weeks after their baby's birth, with depression starting in the 3-to-6-month postpartum period and ranging between 10% and 25% [12].

Prevention and Treatment

The mother (wife) can play important role in the prevention of depression among father along with the family member's, friends and fathers who have already experienced such a state in their life after the birth of the first child. Depression in fathers can be overcome by mothers by setting aside an hour or two each week together, meeting up with friends and socializing with people and the family. Sharing parenting roles with fathers, sharing advice, stories and feelings, getting involved in physical activities like a walk through the park, investing time in hobbies etc. may lower fathers' feelings of isolation [13]. Community services include explaining role of father and care of the child. There should be Provision for Paternity leave from the government and private sectors for their employees; So that the father can give time to partner and child. Couple therapy would be best if both parents are having depressive symptoms [14]. If the symptoms persist, father alone or along with partner and family member can approach psychologist and psychiatrist [15]. A complete assessment can be made to diagnose the level of depression and start with antidepressant drugs. "The important thing to remember is that all of the negative consequences of PPND are avoidable," says Dr. Courtenay. "Although it's a very serious – and sometimes life-threatening – condition, with proper treatment and support, men can fully recover from PPND. Getting help can save a man's life – or his marriage [16]. Clinicians treating depressed parents need to evaluate potential contributing factors (e.g., parenting skills, expressed emotion, modeling of depressotypic coping patterns) and address those that can be modified [17]. A more detailed assessment of fathers during the postnatal period is recommended, especially when their partners are also depressed, so that the condition will be promptly recognized and treated [18]. Antidepressant medications, cognitive behavioral therapy, and interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) are considered as effective treatments for major depression [19].

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