Web-only Commentary

This is a timely and well written synthesis of recent literature on antenatal risk factors for postpartum depression. It provides a brief but comprehensive overview of postpartum mood disorders and continues with a detailed description of the database used. In addition to two major published meta-analysis (70 studies including 12,000 subjects) more recent studies with nearly 10,000 subjects were also analysed. Although the results are not new or surprising—that is, the risk factors identified are very much in line with previous reports, the analysis of this—the largest database ever—using Cohen’s effect size is very impressive.

The message is clear: the onus is on primary healthcare providers (family physicians, obstetricians, and nurse practitioners, to name a few) to be alert to and inquire about the strong risk factors which are so easily identifiable during pregnancy or in the very early postpartum period. This at a time when perinatal mood and anxiety disorders are still very much underdiagnosed, undertreated, or missed altogether, sometimes with dire consequences.

It is encouraging that at least three additional reports were published at about the same time as this article, all covering much the same topic and all with a similar message.1–3

Unfortunately, all of them have been published in psychiatric journals and thus will not reach the equally, or perhaps even more, important target audience of general practitioners, obstetricians, and gynaecologists.

Meir Steiner, MD, PhD, FRCPC
Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences and
Obstetrics & Gynecology, McMaster University
Director of Research, Department of Psychiatry
Director, Women's Health Concerns Clinic
St. Joseph's Healthcare
Hamilton, ON Canada

References

