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Into the Light: Using Technology to Develop a Mother/Family Centered Peer Support Network [English and Spanish versions]

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Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) are estimated to occur in up to 20% of women who are either pregnant or have recently given birth and can include postpartum depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, mania and psychosis. Of women diagnosed with a PMAD only a small number will receive treatment. For some women the stigma and shame associated with mental illness prevent their help seeking, and access to care may be limited by time and resource constraints. The prevalence and limited treatment of these illnesses make PMADs a significant public health issue. Left untreated, these illnesses can dramatically impact a woman's ability to care for herself and her child, and in severe cases may result in maternal and/or infant mortality. Peer support has been demonstrated as an effective treatment intervention when delivered in-person and over the phone. However with the increasing popularity of online patient communities and social media in health care delivery, further exploration of peer support delivered through online and mobile technology is needed. The use of technology has the potential to dramatically improve access to peer support and ultimately to treatment for women from underserved communities and those in rural locations.

Into the Light is a capacity building initiative led by Postpartum Progress Inc. (Shannon Hennig, MA) with five patient leaders (Sara Beckel, Cindy Lee-Herrick, Graeme Seabrook, Chelsea Steiner, and Lisa Tremayne) in collaboration with The Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth (Joanne Nicholson, PhD). This project is funded through a Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Pipeline-to-Proposal Award #5134284, administered on behalf of PCORI by the National Network of Public Health Institutes.

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References


