Behavioral Health considerations in prenatal and postpartum care

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What is Behavioral Health?

Mental Health:
• Psychiatric
  • Severe and persistent mental illness
  • Substance use
  • Evaluation & diagnosis
• Coping skills for stress & common psychosocial issues

Stress:
• Suicidality & passive morbid ideation
• Being overwhelmed
• Major life changes or events

Health Behaviors:
• Weight loss
• Substance use
• Sleep hygiene
• Managing new diagnosis
• Chronic illness management
What is Behavioral Health?

• Clinical
  • Stress: new onset panic or anxiety, insomnia, adjusting to a new diagnosis
  • Grief: death, loss, change
  • Chronic Illness Management: obesity, diabetes, hypertension, chronic pain
  • Behavior Change: substance use, chronic disease

• Any issue requiring support for motivation and behavioral change to improve overall health and wellness

• Focus on communication and relationship between patient and provider
The Biopsychosocial Model

**BIO**
- Gender
- Disability
- Physical health
- Neurochemistry
- Stress reactivity
- Genetic vulnerability

**PSYCH**
- Behaviour
- Personality
- Attitudes/Beliefs
- Learning and memory
- Coping and social skills
- Self-esteem and emotions

**SOCIAL**
- Education
- Social support
- Peer relationships
- Family background
- Socioeconomic status

**WELL-BEING**
- IQ
- Temperament
- Substance abuse
- Family relationships
- Life events
How do you see pregnancy and birth impacted by....

- Stress
- Grief
- Chronic Disease
- Behavior Change
- Trauma
Stress and mental health in pregnancy

• What mental health concerns do you see in pregnancy?
Stress and pregnancy

• “Stress” can include...
  • Mental health (depression, anxiety)
  • Bereavement and grief
  • Bad relationship with family and/or partner
  • External disasters

• Why? Unclear. Possibly...
  • Cortisol
  • Blood flow
  • Serotonin

• Importance of timing of stress is unclear

(Glover, 2014; Kingston & Tough, 2014; Leis et al., 2014; Van den Bergh, 2017; Woods et al., 2010)
Outcomes for child development

• Prenatal stress
  • Lower birthweight for gestational age
  • Earlier delivery and pregnancy
  • Induced hypertension
  • Altered physical outcomes (e.g., increased risk of asthma)

• Correlations for behavioral outcomes for children later in life
  • Anxiety and depression
    • “If the mother was in the top 15% for anxiety, her child was at double the risk for emotional and behavioural problems at ages 4 and 7 years”
  • Symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
  • Symptoms of conduct disorder
  • Possible cognitive and language delay
  • Other socio-emotional problems

(Glover, 2014; Kingston & Tough, 2014; Leis et al., 2014; Van den Bergh, 2017; Woods et al., 2010)
Health behaviors during pregnancy

• Substance use
  • Alcohol (Henderson, Gray, & Brocklehurst, 2007)
  • Opioids (Bell et al., 2016)
  • Nicotine (Ernst, Moolchan, & Robinson, 2001)
  • Cocaine (Lambert, & Bauer, 2012)

• Chronic disease

• Education, problem solving, and motivational interviewing
Postpartum Depression

• Prevelance is 6.5 to 12.9% or higher
• Onset during or within 4 weeks of delivery
• Similar symptoms of MDD
  • Additional can include difficulty bonding with baby
  • Alert to symptoms of bipolar or psychosis
• Treatment with psychosocial strategies for mild to moderate and SSRIs for severe (generally considered to be compatible with breast feeding)
• ~20% of women with postpartum depression continue to have symptoms after one year and 13% after two years
• ~40% of women will have a relapse later, possibly in later pregnancies

(Stewart & Vigod, 2016)
Postpartum Psychosis

• Onset typically in the first days or weeks after delivery
• Symptoms include...
  • Delusions
  • Hallucinations
  • Bizarre behavior
  • Confusion
  • Disorganized thoughts
  • Can be associated with depressed or elevated mood
• ~prevalence of 1 to 2 cases per 1,000 births, can be manifestation of bipolar disorder

(Sit, Rothschild, & Wisner, 2006; Stewart & Vigod, 2016)
Trauma and pregnancy

• Sexual assault and rape
• Familial and/or partner violence
• Traumatic events
• Pregnancy loss and infant loss
• Complications in pregnancy and delivery
So what can we do?

• Assessing safety of mother and baby
• Screening and assessing for...
  • Mental health problems during and after pregnancy
    • E.g., 10-item Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)
  • Substance use
  • Violence involving intimate partner, other trauma
  • Family and social supports
• Treatment from a biopsychosocial perspective
  • Medication for psychiatric disorders
  • Treatment of other physical conditions
  • Physician relationship and reassurance (normalization of negative emotions)
• Frequent follow up if possible, home visits if possible
• Interventions to reduce stress and improve coping
References


