

MOMs (Mental Health for Ohio Moms) - A Survey-Based Study to Assess Physician and Perinatal Women's Perspectives on Perinatal Mental Health Care Availability and Accessibility Across the State of Ohio

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Objectives

The purpose of this study is to assess the perspectives on the availability and accessibility of perinatal mental health care to pregnant and postpartum mothers across Ohio. To do so, we assessed the following:

1. Providers' knowledge and care practices related to PMADs
2. Peripartum mothers' knowledge of PMADs and barriers faced in receiving care

Methods

This cross-sectional survey study employed two arms. The first arm surveyed providers in Ohio, Obstetrics and Gynecology (Ob/Gyn), Primary Care/Family Medicine (PCP), Pediatrics (Pedes), and Psychiatry (Psych)) to assess provider's screening and referral practices, attitudes, and knowledge related to PMADs. Providers were contacted through electronic and postal mail. The second arm surveyed Ohio mothers in OB waiting rooms who are pregnant or postpartum on their awareness of PMADs and the barriers they face when seeking perinatal mental health care.

Results

Patient Survey Results:

- Our sample, mostly from an urban tertiary care academic center, was highly educated.
- High prevalence of perinatal depression (66%) and postpartum psychosis (7%).
- Good community awareness (96% heard of postpartum depression (PPD), 53% know that it is the most common complication of pregnancy, 93% agree that it is important to get help for PMADs.)
- Somewhat lower screening and education rates (67% were screened for PMAD, 61% received PMAD education.)
- Despite above, 66% of those on psychiatric medications, discontinued when pregnant.
- 90% mothers endorse that education would have positively impacted help seeking/maintaining behavior.
- Those who received PMAD education were more likely to answer PMAD awareness question correctly.
- Women with no social support were more likely to endorse PMADs.

Physician Survey Results:

- Awareness / Knowledge – Overall, 67% identified PPD as the most common complication of pregnancy with only 44% of OBs doing so.
- 75% reported < 4 hours of PMAD education

PMAD Screening:

- OBs most likely to screen for PMAD, Pediatricians least likely.
- Most providers tend to screen all pregnant / postpartum women.
- Top screening barriers – Lack of time, Lack of referral sources, and Lack of staff

PMAD Management:

- Upon PMAD identification, 63% of providers refer to mental health, 59% strengthen supports, 54% prescribe psychotropics.
- 59% agree that they are comfortable prescribing psychiatric medications to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, the most preferred medication class being antidepressants.

- 59% would base their decision to continue / discontinue psychotropics on literature review for pregnant women and 69% for lactating mothers.
- Top barriers for mental health referral – Long wait time for appointments & Lack of experts
- Intervention that would best support frontline providers in PMAD management
- Easier access to mental health for patients.
- 90% interested in further training in PMADs
- 35% admit they feel less confident handling PMADs.

Conclusions

- Frontline providers across Ohio have little training in PMADs and many feel uncomfortable caring for these patients.
- They face significant barriers connecting these patients to expert mental health care.
- Many endorse having bad outcomes in PMAD patients including suicide and infanticide.
- Peripartum patients in our sample had a very high prevalence of these disorders, only 2/3 endorsed being screened for and receiving education about PMADs.
- PMADs negatively impacted relationships, ability to work, bonding with newborn, pregnancy health for our patients.
- Top barriers to PMAD care included – severe depression, lack of time, non-availability of appointments, high cost.
- Ohio mothers want affordable & accessible perinatal mental health care and education for themselves and their families.

Acknowledgements

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