Postpartum Psychosis: A Global Analysis of Cultural and Social Barriers in Diagnosis and Treatment

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Objective

To assess how stigma in combination with social and cultural factors affect the diagnosis and treatment of postpartum psychosis.



Background

Postpartum psychosis (PPP) is a brief psychotic disorder beginning within six weeks of delivery.[1] Due to social and cultural obstacles, PPP is underdiagnosed and undertreated.[2] In resource-limited regions, PPP is frequently associated with malicious spiritual origins. Around the world, stigma prevents mothers from seeking out help for fear of being labeled unfit.[3] Limited mental health infrastructure aggravates this issue as it limits psychiatric services for those pursuing aid.

Results

- In much of South Asia and parts of Africa, PPP is thought to be caused by spiritual possession. Consequently, traditional healers are often sought before or in place of psychiatric counsel.[2]
- Spanning continents, PPP is considered taboo. Most prominently, this leads to underdiagnosis in Asian, African, and Middle Eastern countries.[4]
- Many mothers with PPP fear being branded a “bad mother.” This concern bridges all nations and speaks to common societal expectations of maternity.
- Latin American and Middle Eastern countries emphasize a strong connection between motherhood and family honor, further discouraging affected patients from coming forward.[3]
- In various low-resource regions, mothers with mental illness are afforded no legal protections and thus face loss of custody should they present with PPP. [5]
- Coupled with limited access to mental health professionals, shortage of antipsychotic medications, and gender inequality, the aforementioned factors act as formidable obstacles to the diagnosis and treatment of PPP. [6,7,8]



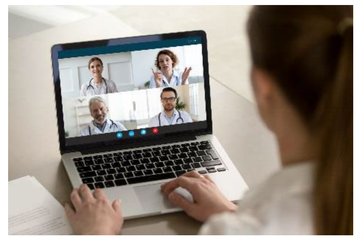
Methods

A Literature review was conducted on the social and cultural responses to PPP by searching The National Library of Medicine Database, Google Scholar, and Rutgers Libraries. Relevant publications were sought using keyword combinations such as "postpartum psychosis," "stigma," "cultural response," "global" and "mental health access.

Future Direction

Viable options to counteract barriers to the treatment of postpartum psychosis include campaigns to reduce stigma, telepsychiatry services, and increased training.

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References

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