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## EXPLORING MOOD VARIABILITY IN PREGNANCY AND POSTPARTUM WOMEN

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**Introduction:** Emotional and moody behaviour is often normalized in childbearing women. However, increased mood variability is associated with psychiatric problems (anxiety, depression, personality disorder), which are potentially deleterious to the health of the developing fetus and mother.

**Purpose:** To increase understanding about mood variability in childbearing women.

**Method:** Depression was measured using the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale (EPDS). Mood variability was calculated from twice-daily diary ratings of “depressed”, “fear”, and “irritable” mood for one week each in early pregnancy, late pregnancy, and postpartum.

**Findings:** We recruited 47 women. Depression, as measured by the EPDS, and fear mood variability decreased from early pregnancy to postpartum. Depressed and irritable mood variability also declined during pregnancy, but increased in post-partum. Increases in mood variability (depressed, irritable) from late pregnancy to postpartum predicted higher postpartum EPDS. Mood diaries were available from 30 non-parturient women for comparison. Pregnant and postpartum women had higher irritable but not depressed or fear mood variability.

**Conclusion:** Mood, particularly anxiety, is variable over the course of pregnancy into early postpartum. This may be related to diminishing concerns about the pregnancy and baby's health after birth, sleep disruptions, or hormonal changes. Depressed mood variability is correlated with, but is distinct from depression as measured by the EPDS. We present results counter to the notion that all mood is amplified in childbearing women.