POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION AMONGST PREMATURE INFANT-MOTHERS

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Introduction
Preterm birth is a sudden and unpredictable event threatening the survival of newborns and their long-term developmental prognosis. It can also be a source of psychological trauma for mothers and may manifest as anxiety, depression or PTSD.

Objectives & Aims
Our study aims at evaluating the symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD according to the severity of prematurity amongst mothers of premature infants.

Methods

We targeted 30 mothers of premature children in the Neonatology Department, University Hospital 'Hédi Chaker', Sfax, Tunisia. Their responses were compared to a control group of 30 full-term infant mothers.

Research tools:

1. A questionnaire filled in by the respondents.
2. Perinatal Risk Inventory.
3. Impact of Event Scale.
4. Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale.

Results

Average gestational age was 32.8 weeks. Average newborn current age was 5 months. 73.3% of pregnancies were single, 23.3% were twins, and 3.3% were triplets. A past abortion or preterm birth was noted in 26.7% of cases. Average number of days in hospital was 19.

Occurrence of symptoms of anxiety, depression or PTSD is increased in preterm infant parents compared with the control group. A significant correlation was found between severity of prematurity and the symptoms of intrusion and avoidance ($p<0.001$), anxiety ($p=0.016$), and depression ($p=0.016$). Depression was also correlated to newborn stay duration ($p=0.035$).

Conclusions

Mothers facing premature birth experienced painful and violent emotional distress, which may affect relationship between the mother and her baby. An early psychological support for the mother seems necessary to improve this relationship as well as child development.