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PRENATAL DEPRESSION: ROLE OF CHILDHOOD STRESSORS, CURRENT STRESSORS AND PAST EMOTIONAL DISORDERS

J. Dayan^{1,2}, C. Creveuil¹, V. O'Keane³

¹University Hospital of Caen, ²INSERM U923, Caen, France, ³Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

Background: Very few studies have conducted a multivariate analysis incorporating both the major predictors of depression in women, in accordance with comprehensive developmental models of depression, and specific stressors associated with the biological and psychosocial state of the mother-to-be.

Methodology: We used a cross-sectional cohort design to analyze the associations between prenatal depression and potential risk factors. 693 French-speaking women with singleton pregnancies at 20-28 weeks' gestation were consecutively recruited. Fifty women with missing values were subsequently excluded from the analysis. Depressive symptoms were assessed on the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale. Risk factors were either extracted from the computerized obstetric records or assessed by means of self-administered questionnaires. The associations between prenatal depression and the potential risk factors were assessed using log-binomial regression models to obtain a direct estimate of relative risk.

Principal findings: The following factors were found to be significant in the multivariate analysis: level of education, past psychiatric history, stress related to the health and viability of the fetus and stress related to severe marital conflicts or to serious difficulties at work. An association was also found with the previous delivery of a child with a major or minor birth defect. Univariate analyses revealed a strong association with childhood adversity (parental rejection and family secrets).

Conclusions: Our study identifies several risk factors that could easily be assessed in clinical practice. It draws attention to the impact of previously delivering a child with a birth defect and to the association with childhood adversity.