

AS12-01 - CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF THE POSTNATAL DEPRESSION IN MILAN, ITALY

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Immigrant women, especially the newcomers, are particularly at risk for developing mental disorders. The main risk factors are the stress from the immigration and the acculturation process. Some aspects of this process may affect physical and emotional well-being. Other risk factors could be the lack of social support, the presence of financial worries, job and housing frailty, the social isolation and separation from the extended family, the difficulty of access to the basic services for social, cultural and language barriers, the discrimination and the unfamiliarity with medical practices. An inability to communicate in the language of the new country may impede access to social and mental health services. Immigrant women have lower levels of social support, and it is this lack of support, rather than immigrant status per se, that is related to higher levels of reported stress. It appears, in conclusion, that immigrant women may constitute a high-risk group for mental disorders. The results suggest that not only are there important barriers to accessing mental health care for recent immigrant women, but it can also be challenging for mental health care workers to deliver such needed care. Understanding some of these barriers and challenges from the perspective of mental health care providers is an important step to remedying gaps and obstacles in the community mental health system.