

P01-261

PERINATAL DEPRESSION AND USE OF HEALTH SERVICES IN BRITISH WOMEN OF PAKISTANI ORIGIN

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Background: Perinatal depression (PND) has adverse effects on the well being of the mother-infant dyad. Women with PND often show different patterns of help seeking behaviour.

Objective: We aimed to examine the association between PND and the reporting of health events and healthcare use in a cohort of British women of Pakistani origin.

Method: Participants were recruited from antenatal clinics in the North West of England and followed up 6 months postnatal. Sixty-seven women diagnosed with depression using the Schedule for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatry (SCAN) were compared with 156 non depressed controls in terms of reporting of health events elicited using the Life Events and Difficulties Schedule (LEDS). Health events included any condition that involved attending primary or secondary care.

Results: Depressed mothers were 1.5 times more likely to report a health event within the perinatal period ($p=0.005$) and 1.8 times more likely to report a health event (0.031) outside the perinatal period. Depressed mothers were more likely to attend secondary care services for their children ($p=0.001$) but there was no significant difference in terms of attendance at primary care.

Conclusion: Depressed mothers were more likely to report personal health events and more likely to access secondary care rather than primary care services for health events affecting their children. This highlights the hidden costs of this condition and the need for adequate diagnosis and management of this treatable but under recognised illness.