



Residential early parenting programs are a vital part in a stepped approach to postnatal maternal mental health care

Impact of residential early parenting program on maternal mental health

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BACKGROUND

Up to 35% of parents report unsettled infant behaviours in the first 12 months of their baby's life. Prolonged unsettled infant behaviour has been linked with poor maternal health including depression and anxiety. Early parenting services in Australia offer structured residential programs to address moderate to severe non-psychotic mental health problems among women and unsettled infant / toddler behaviours.

RESEARCH AIMS

- ❖ Estimate the impact of residential early parenting program on postpartum depressive symptoms experienced by women;
- ❖ Identify factors associated with improved or worsened postpartum depressive symptoms after completing the program and six weeks post-discharge.

METHODS

An analysis of routinely collected data from all patients admitted to Ramsay Health Care's Masada Private Hospital Early Parenting Centre, in Melbourne, Australia between May 2021 to September 2022

RESULTS

- ❖ Data from 1220 of 1290 (95%) eligible women were included in the analyses.
- ❖ Significant and clinically meaningful improvement in mean Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scores from 11.7 at pre-admission to 7.1 pre-discharge and the proportion of women scoring in the clinical range (≥ 10) from 63.9% at pre-admission to 24.5% at pre-discharge. This decline continued at six weeks follow up.
- ❖ Women who had high depressive symptoms at pre-admission, lower parenting confidence scores, higher borderline personality disorder symptoms, more stressful life events, and/or currently seeing a mental health professional had a greater likelihood of having depressive symptoms that persisted at a clinically significant level at pre-discharge.
- ❖ At six-week post discharge women with low pre-discharge depressive symptoms had an increased risk of progressing to high depressive symptoms if they had higher borderline personality disorder symptoms, a baby under six months of age, and / or two or more children.

IMPLICATIONS

- ❖ Admission to the 5-night residential Early Parenting Program at Masada Private Hospital resulted in most women experiencing improved postnatal mental health.
- ❖ These programs provide a highly clinically effective treatment and warrant recognition as a vital component of postnatal maternal mental health care in Australia.
- ❖ Women with high level of borderline personality disorder traits need further ongoing care for example the 25-week group program of Mother-Infant Dialectical Behaviour Therapy

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