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Postpartum Depression and Postpartum Blues: An Evolutionary Psychology Approach

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Definitions

- **“Postpartum blues”** (PPB): mild depression commonly experienced short time after birth also named “baby blues” or “maternity blues”
- **“Postpartum depression”** (PPD): longer and more severe form of “postpartum blues”

Importance

- 50-80% of women affected by PPB
- 10% of women affected by PPD
- Widespread in western countries
- Cultural differences in causes and evolution
- Relatively long duration (several months up to few years for PPD)
- Causes insufficiently known

Risk Factors and Symptoms

Risk Factors	Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marital problems• Depression during pregnancy• Insufficient or no social support• Stress or negative life events during pregnancy• Traumatic birth experiences• Early hospital discharge• History of severe premenstrual syndrome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fatigue, exhaustion• Sadness• Difficulty in sleeping• Appetite disorders• Anxiety, fear• Inability to cope with daily problems• Unrealistic concern for the baby• Thoughts of harming oneself or the baby

Methods

- **Design**: questionnaire administered on a sample of 65 mothers
- **Hypothesis**: There is an association between the modern environment (evolutionary new) surrounding the parturient and the postpartum affective disorders.

Statistical Analysis

- Modeling Postpartum Blues and Depression
 - Manual elimination yielded inconclusive results
 - Stepwise selection
 - Prenatal affective disorders- OR=6.707, 95% CI = (2.427, 18.533)
 - Abortion intention- OR = 5.532, 95% CI = (1.756, 17.431)
 - Worries about birth- OR = 4.749, 95% CI = (1.548, 14.568)
 - Forward elimination
 - Same as above, plus
 - Help from husband during pregnancy- OR = 0.571, 95% CI = (0.307, 1.059)
 - Backward elimination yielded inconclusive results

Statistical Analysis (Continued)

- Grouped data: 10 groups
 - Mom, birth and previous pregnancies
 - Socio-economic
 - Perception of child and social environment
 - Pregnancy
 - Birth
 - Child
 - Perception of birth, relationship with child, and accommodation
 - Relationship with child
 - Accommodation
 - Risk of postpartum depression/blues

Statistical Analysis (Continued)

- Results of analyses using grouped variables
 - No significant predictors according to manual elimination
 - No significant predictors according to automated procedures
- ➔ Therefore, inconclusive results!

Conclusions

- Increased risk for postpartum depression and blues for:
 - Prenatal affective disorders
 - Abortion intention
 - Worries concerning the birth
- Protective effect of
 - Help from the husband during pregnancy

Recommendations

- Since psychological factors resulting from the evolutionary approach were more significant than traditional ones, they should be considered in future investigations
- More and deeper research using larger samples

Any questions?