



Berner Fachhochschule
Haute école spécialisée bernoise
Bern University of Applied Sciences

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Scientific report of the symposium «Maternal Mental Health in Pregnancy and Postpartum»
(«3. Fachtagung Geburtshilfe «Psychische Erkrankungen in der Schwangerschaft und nach der Geburt»),
Bern, January 22nd 2016

Rational for the symposium

Mental disorders during pregnancy and in the postnatal period have adverse physical, psychological and social effects on affected women, their children and their families. Prevalence rates and incidences of most disorders seem to be comparable to those in non-pregnant women. However, individual, social and health system related barriers hinder women from being diagnosed and treated appropriately. Mental disorders in pregnancy and early motherhood is a public health issue that is mostly neglected nowadays in Switzerland. Therefore, the University of Applied Sciences, Health Division, considered the topic of maternal mental health disorders as top research priority for the newly funded research division in Midwifery Research. In this context, the University of Applied Sciences, Health Division, Section for Midwifery Research organized a symposium on «**Maternal Mental Health in Pregnancy and Postpartum**» in interdisciplinary cooperation with the University Women’s Hospital in Bern, Section for Obstetrics. The symposium took place in the Ettore Rossi Auditorium of the Inselspital in Bern on January 22nd 2016.

Facts and figures about the symposium

The interprofessional symposium was attended by a total of 356 attendees of which 100 were midwives, 60 nurses, 35 physicians, 8 psychologists and 6 home nursing care consultants. Social workers, lecturers, students and other interested professionals were also present. The symposium was successfully funded by a variety of companies and foundations and we were able to achieve a total fundraising amount of CHF 31’200. 14 industrial and non-industrial exhibitors attended the symposium. On the figure below you can find the distribution of attendees according to the evaluation (n=165).

Bitte wählen Sie aus der untenstehenden Liste Ihre Funktion/Anstellung aus

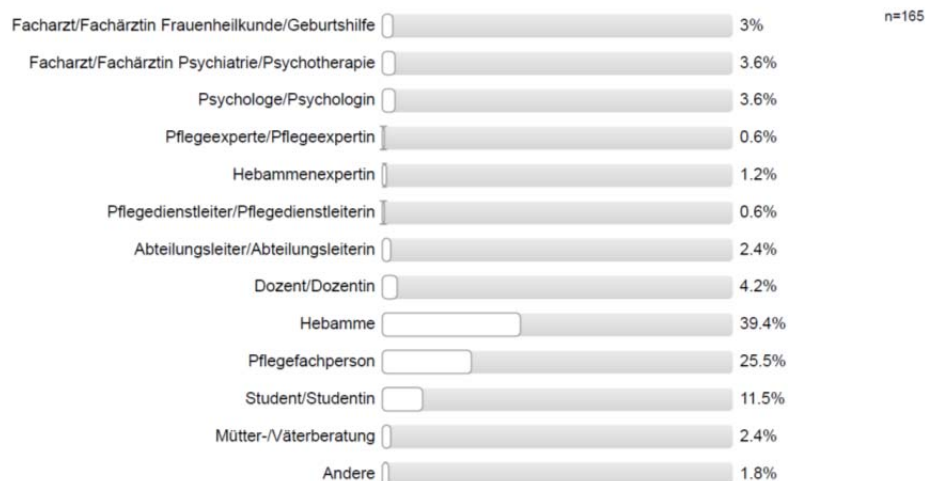


Figure 1: Percentage of professional groups according to the congress evaluation (n=165)

Venue place: Inselspital Bern, Ettore Rossi Auditorium

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Scientific Committee

Prof. PD Dr. Eva Cignacco, Head of the Section for Midwifery Research, University of Applied Sciences, Health Division

Dorothee Eichenberger zur Bonsen, Head of the Discipline for Midwifery, University of Applied Sciences, Health Division

Prof. Dr. Sabine Hahn, Head of the Section for Research and Development in Nursing, University of Applied Sciences, Health Division

Prof. Dr. med. Daniel Surbek, Medical Director and Ordinarius of Bern University Women's Hospital, Section for Obstetrics

PD Dr. med. Sibil Tschudin, leading doctor of the Women's Hospital, University of Basel

Organizing Committee

Dr. des. Jeannine Khan (chair), University of Applied Sciences, Health Division

Isabelle Romano, University of Applied Sciences, Health Division

Christa Twellmann, Bern University Women's Hospital, Section for Obstetrics

Welcome notes and presentations

Welcome notes were provided by the **leadership of the University of Applied Sciences**, Section for Health, by the **CEO of the University Hospital Inselspital, Holger Baumann** and the **councillor of the Canton of Bern, Dr. med. Philippe Perrenoud**. The welcome notes highlighted the necessity of an interprofessional development of coordinated and continuous psychiatric care in order to improve safety for affected women and to reach positive outcomes for women and their families.

The presentations were given by national and international speakers and provided the audience with a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Particularly, existing gaps in health care provision of affected women were the focus of interest. Prevalence, diagnosis, psychotropic drugs and their consequences for affected women and their fetus or infant as well psychotherapeutic approaches were in the frontline of the presentations and discussions. Particularly, maternal mental health care provision of the Canton Bern was in the focus. An existing English Master Curriculum of the University of Salford (GB) for midwives on perinatal mental disorders was also presented at the symposium.

Cutting edge research findings and application of pharmacological and therapeutically treatment modalities were presented and discussed. It was particularly highlighted that a qualified mental health assessment as for instance during antenatal care or a treatment in an early stage can essentially improve the chances of recovery. Pregnant women and mothers with maternal mental disorders depend on a comprehensive care from different health professionals which leads to the necessity for a good interprofessional cooperation.

Short summary of each single presentation

Dr. Anke Berger, lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences (Discipline for Midwifery, Health Division) provided information about mental disorders in pregnancy and postpartum from a public health perspective. Results of national hospital statistics (Medizinische Statistik der Krankenhäuser in der Schweiz, 2012) indicate that psychological problems of hospitalized mothers during pregnancy (1.5%), birth (0.7%) and up to one year postpartum (6.3%) are rarely recorded. In contrast to the inpatient statistics, the statistics of the health care insurance HELSANA relating to outpatient services show that 26% of the women need access to treatment during the perinatal period due to a mental health condition

(9.4% 3 months before pregnancy, 11.8% during pregnancy and 17.2% up to one year postpartum). This discrepancy of inpatient and outpatient detection of maternal mental health problems in affected women indicate that the problem is not well depicted through national hospital statistics. This might contribute to the public neglect of the issue.

PD Dr. med. Sibil Tschudin, responsible obstetrician for psychosomatic medicine at the Women's Hospital of the University of Basel presented patient pathways being in place at the Women's Hospital of the University of Basel supporting the identification of early mental disorders during pregnancy. She emphasized on the fact that an antenatal depression presents a high risk factor for a postpartal depression. If maternal mental disorders are early identified, individual treatment and supportive measures can prevent and decrease an unfavorable development. For this reason, a systematic screening is important and midwives are important experts for an early diagnosis.

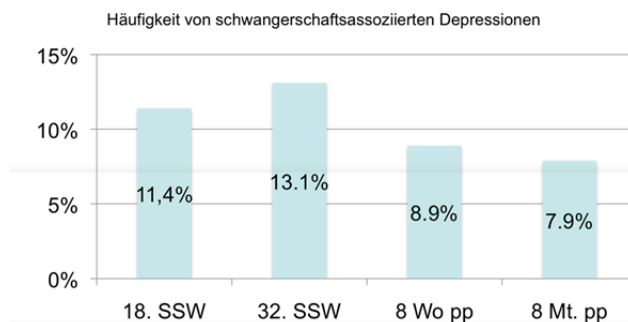


Figure 2 : Frequency of pregnancy related depressions (Heron et al., J Affect. Disorder, 2004)
(Data of PD Dr. Tschudin's presentation.)

Dr. med. Werner Stadlmayr, head of the «Geburt und Familie - Praxis») in Aarau, focussed on the bonding and attachment theory for antenatal and postnatal care between mother, father and infant (dyadic and triadic treatment modalities). He underlined the importance of a bio-psycho-social care approach for the work with affected women, due to the often associated somatization of psychological problems by those women. Women need to constantly adapt the bonding to the self and to the social environment. Adjustment processes can be promoted through the building of relationships. Health care professionals need to be aware of a bio-psycho-social care model in order to comprehensively understand psychosomatic processes of affected women.

Prof. Dr. med. Anita Riecher-Rössler, Professor and Ordinaria for Psychiatrics at the University Clinics in Basel, talked about psychotropic drugs and psychotherapy in pregnancy. She underlined the necessity of the urgent treatment of those diagnoses. The neglect of early pharmacological and psychotherapeutic treatment can lead to longlasting consequences not only for the mothers but also for the unborn child and the whole family. The treatment depends on the kind and magnitude of the disease. She highlighted the role of health care professionals in the de-stigmatization of mental health issues and in a less reluctant interprofessional collaboration with psychiatric services. She further pointed out the importance of a treatment based on partnership with affected women. It is important to inform and involve affected women and their partners in all decisions. There is a necessity for a strong cooperation in a multidisciplinary team of gynecologists, psychiatrists, midwives and social workers.

Prof. Dr. med. Daniel Surbek, Medical Director and Ordinarius of Bern University Women's Hospital, Section for Obstetrics, talked about prenatal aspects of care of mentally affected women during pregnancy and postpartum. His talk underlined the fact that maternal mental disorders can affect the process of pregnancy and the development of the fetus on a direct or indirect way. There is a necessity of an integrative care model among specialists to reach an optimal outcome. Prof. Dr. Surbek talked about

pathophysiological relationships and about prophylactic and therapeutic interventions in the management of pregnancies.

Dr. med. Wolfgang Paulus, head of the Institute of Reproduction Toxicology at the St. Elisabeth Hospital in Ravensburg (Germany) talked about the treatment of mothers with psychotropic drugs in pregnancy and about risks for child development. The speaker presented new findings regarding the treatment with antidepressants, neuroleptics and mood stabilizers. Psychotropic drugs should be used in a reduced dose and women should receive well balanced pharmacological treatment. In 30 percent, adjustment disorders in newborns can occur. Whereas there are some risks of pharmacological treatment, the advantages of an adequate treatment in obstetrical situations prevail. The talk of Dr. Paulus definitively was a highlight in terms of de-stigmatization of pharmacological treatment of affected women during pregnancy, as health care professionals tend not to provide pharmacological treatment due to fears of side-effects.

Prof. Dr. med. Thomas J. Müller, Medical Head of the Psychiatric outpatient Services of the University Hospital in Bern indicated that health care provision of the Canton Bern for women with mental illnesses during pregnancy and postpartum is scarce. He underlined that there is a slight underprovision of mother-child wards in the inpatient setting (only 4 beds in the Canton Bern). There is a need for more beds for women with per acute mental disorders.

Treatments in mother-child wards show positive outcomes. The Canton Bern should provide more mother-child wards and there is a need of a specialized inpatient and outpatient care for mothers and children (up to 1 year old). The focus should lie on the interaction (between mother and child) and the inclusion of the father.

Mrs. Jeanne Lythgoe, Msc BA Hons, lecturer and supervisor for midwives at the University of Salford (GB) presented the curriculum «Perinatal Mental Health» which was developed at the University of Salford (GB). The curriculum was developed in order to train postgraduate midwives to better cope with women and families affected by a maternal mental disorder. This unique Masters module was developed after extensive consultation with clinicians and families. It aims to develop expertise delivered within a multi-professional environment, focused on not only maternal but also infant mental health. The module runs over one semester, taught sessions are delivered by experts, including theory and practice, where discussion is encouraged. Clinical scenarios are used throughout the module to explore the identification, assessment and management of perinatal mental health illness.

PD. Dr. Eva Cignacco, head of the Section for Midwifery Research at the University of Applied Sciences, Health Division, presented the planned module «Maternal Mental Health» at the University of Applied Sciences in Bern. Prof. Dr. Cignacco emphasized that there is an urgent need for midwives with an in depth knowledge about mental diseases during pregnancy, birth and postnatal care. There is a need for masters prepared midwives playing an active role as «Advanced Practice Midwives» in interprofessional health care for affected women and their families.

Conclusions and results of the evaluation

The successful and well attended symposium showed that a qualified mental health assessment as for instance during antenatal care or a treatment in an early stage can essentially improve the chances of recovery for affected mothers. Pregnant women and mothers with maternal mental disorders depend on a comprehensive and competent care of an interprofessional team. The symposium emphasized that major gaps in knowledge as well adequate and tailored health care services for affected women and their families exist in Switzerland. Future research and practice development concepts should urgently address the issue needed in order to provide good outcomes and safety for affected families.



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To conclude, we can state that the symposium «Maternal Mental Health in Pregnancy and Postpartum» was a full success and a milestone in the field of maternal mental health in Switzerland. It provided the organizers and the audience with an excellent basis for further research and practice development in this area of expertise.

Some selected quotations of attendees:

«Top Fachtagung – weiter so auch im 2018! Für mich war es sehr interessant! Danke!»

«Ausgezeichnete und multiprofessionelle Fortbildung!»

«Ich hoffe auf eine bessere Versorgungslage im Kanton Bern! Herzlichen Dank für den spannenden Tag plus leckeres Essen!»

«Hervorragende Tagung: Thema, Referenten, Organisation, Zusammenfassung, Take Home Messages!»

«Beispielhafter interprofessioneller Einstieg in das Thema im Kt. Bern.»

Link to the Conference Website (review of the conference, abstracts and PDFs of the presentations and impressions)

https://www.gesundheit.bfh.ch/de/forschung/geburtshilfe/veranstaltungen/3_fachtagung_geburtshilfe.html

Bern, 23.03.2016

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