



Pergamon

Child Abuse & Neglect 25 (2001) 909–921

Child Abuse  
& Neglect

## Childhood sexual abuse, parenting and postpartum depression—a 3-year follow-up study

Anne Buist<sup>a,\*</sup>, Helen Janson<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Psychiatry, University of Melbourne, Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre, Locked Bag 1, West Heidelberg, Victoria 3081, Australia*

<sup>b</sup>*Mercy Hospital for Women, East Melbourne, Victoria, Australia*

Received 27 April 2000; received in revised form 6 September 2000; accepted 15 September 2000

---

### Abstract

**Objective:** This study is the second and final phase of a 3-year follow-up study of women who had been admitted with a major depressive episode in the postpartum period, along with their children and partners where present. The effect of a maternal sexual abuse history on the women's well-being and child outcome compared to those women without such a history is highlighted.

**Method:** Forty-five of an original cohort of 56 women were seen with their child where possible, when the child was an average of 36.8 months old. Twenty-two women had no history of sexual abuse, and 23 gave a history of childhood sexual abuse. Women were assessed with respect to well-being, relationships, parenting stress and psychiatric history since recruitment. The child's behavior and cognitive development was also assessed.

**Results:** Women with a history of sexual abuse rated higher depression and anxiety scores ( $p < .05$ ), and had greater life stresses ( $p < .05$ ). Their partners rated themselves as more comforting and their children as more disturbed ( $p < .05$ ). Over time, this group had failed to improve as much as the nonabuse group on these measures. There was no difference in child cognitive scores between groups.

**Conclusions:** A history of sexual abuse in women who become depressed postpartum may have long term implications for the woman's mental health, her relationship with her child, as well as the emotional development of her child. It is critical to offer women in this high-risk group supports in an attempt to minimize these difficulties and any long-term adverse effects. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

**Keywords:** Sexual abuse; Depression; Parenting; Development

---

\* Corresponding author.

## **Introduction**

Increasing interest in outcomes of the children of the mentally ill have resulted in a number of long-term studies of children of women who have histories of depression or schizophrenia (Seifer & Dickstein, 1993). Those studies looking at the offspring of depressed women have included studies with women who have been diagnosed with depression occurring in the child's first year of life, following these families from early infancy to look at the potential impact of the maternal depression.

Cox, Puckering, Pound, and Mills (1987) suggested the possible methods by which the depression might impact on children. They classified these as genetic, interaction of genetic and environmental influences, exposure to symptoms, alterations in parenting via changes in family structure or function and the effect of depression, and incidental and correlated factors influential or interactive with depression.

Tatano Beck's (1995) meta-analytic review of 19, principally American, studies concluded that postpartum depression had a "medium to large effect" on mother-infant interaction in the year after delivery. She notes, however, that the larger the study and the better the design, the less effect was noticed.

A subsequent meta-analysis by the same author (Tatano Beck, 1998) examined nine studies that looked at the effect of postpartum depression on the cognitive and emotional development of children older than 1 year. She concluded it had a small but significant effect on both aspects of development.

The studies, a number of which follow the children to school age, are generally small and complicated by:

Differing measures—some cognitive, others behavioral, often with little distinction, as well as a mixture of observational techniques and self reports between studies (Tatano Beck, 1995; 1998).

Age of child—this affects the assessor's ability to engage, as well as the accuracy of the instruments available. At young ages, a considerable variability is possible for most instruments (Tatano Beck, 1995; 1998).

Definition of depression—particularly what postpartum depression is, and whether the depression has been continuously present, re-emerging later, or only present later (Tatano Beck, 1995; 1998; Coghill, Caplan, Alexander, Robson & Kumar, 1986; Caplan et al., 1989).

Other factors—such as studies involving socioeconomically disadvantaged families (Murray & Cooper, 1997).

Findings in early childhood have varied, with some studies concluding a negative effect on behavior (Caplan et al., 1989; Sharp et al., 1995; Lee & Gotlib, 1989), others on cognitive development (Coghill et al., 1986; Hay & Kumar, 1995). These studies differed in conclusions as to the importance of the timing of the depression, some suggesting current depression was more crucial, others depression in the first year of life. Murray and Cooper (1997) also suggested that the child's gender was influential in the outcome.

While many of these studies looked at some of the broader factors beside the depression

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات