

MAINSTREAMING MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION IN PRIMARY MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH CARE.

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Background

Antenatal programs to reduce postnatal depression are ineffective (Austin & Lumley, 2003) and current population screening is based on case finding and referral (Buist & Bilszta, 2006). Clinical practice suggests that factors occurring after birth are salient including infant crying and partner relationship (Fisher et al, 2003). PEPP is an innovative, universal psycho-educational program to promote confidence and reduce distress in new parents. Trained Maternal and Child Health Nurses conduct half-day seminars for groups of mothers, fathers and their first newborns in primary health care. PEPP meets new parents' high learning needs by building infant settling skills and providing new language and concepts to re-negotiate the unpaid workload in non-confrontational ways. The first aim of a controlled trial of PEPP's effectiveness was to establish the salience and acceptability of PEPP. This abstract addresses Conference Methodologies 4 and 5.

Methods

PEPP was implemented in 7 metropolitan and regional local government areas in 2007. Men and women were recruited at the first home visit, completed a telephone interview and invited to attend PEPP at baby age 4 weeks. Facilitators provided formal self assessment of program implementation and outcomes, and participants completed anonymous satisfaction surveys after each seminar.

Results

187 women and 143 men completed the first interview. 37 PEPP seminars were conducted by three trained Maternal and Child Health Nurses. In total, 120 /143 (84%) of the couples attended seminars. 107 (89%) mothers (M) and 98 (82%) fathers (F) completed evaluations. Facilitators reported that objectives of individual components of PEPP were successfully met in almost all cases. Overall 92% M and 82% F had increased understanding of infant temperament; 89% M and 91% F found learning

infant settling strategies useful and 75% M and F that they could now discuss parenting more effectively with each other. Confidence was already increased in two-thirds and > 95% concurred that the content was useful for all parents.

Discussion and Conclusions

The PEPP trial exemplifies knowledge transfer and exchange: PEPP program development was informed by clinical practice evidence and health promotion theory. This process evaluation has demonstrated salience and acceptability of PEPP to participants and facilitators. Training primary health care providers in this mental health promotion program builds workforce mental health literacy and capacity. Trial outcomes will contribute to evidenced based mental health promotion in primary care. The findings support **the recommendation** that universal postpartum mental health promotion should aim to address modifiable social determinants of mental health problems rather than to identify and treat individual psychopathology.

References

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