

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Maternal Depression Screening During Prenatal and Postpartum Care at a Navy and Marine Corps Military Treatment Facility

Spooner, S., Rastle, M., & Elmore, K. (2012). Maternal depression screening during prenatal and postpartum care at a Navy and Marine Corps military treatment facility. *Military Medicine*, 177(10), 1208-1211. doi:10.7205/milmed-d-12-00159

SUMMARY: Survey data from wives of male Service members who were receiving obstetric care at a Navy and Marine Corps military treatment facility were used to evaluate rates of perinatal depression and assess the impact of deployment as a risk factor. Results suggested relatively low rates of perinatal depression, although rates of depression did vary according to husbands deployment status.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Five percent of surveys indicated high risk for depression at each time point (i.e., initial obstetric visit, 28- to 32-gestational weeks, and six weeks postpartum).
- At the initial obstetric visit, there was a significantly higher proportion of depression among women whose husbands were deployed than those whose husbands were not deployed.
- At six-weeks postpartum, there were a significantly higher rate of depression among women whose husbands were deployed or preparing to deploy compared to those whose husbands were not deployed.
- There were no differences in the proportion of positive depression screens according to deployment status at the 28- to 32-gestational week appointment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer support groups to pregnant women whose husbands are deployed or are preparing to deploy in order to reduce the risk of depression
- Offer childcare for military mothers struggling with postpartum depression
- Publish information to military families regarding the symptoms of postpartum depression and resources that can help families cope

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend that military hospitals routinely screen for depression among pregnant mothers
- Promote the development and continuation of maternal support programs throughout the deployment cycle
- Recommend the development of educational campaigns (e.g., information on websites, posters in clinics) regarding depression related to pregnancy.

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Retrospective medical record data were used for the current study; women had to have completed a depression screen and reported their husbands deployment status during an obstetric visit to be included.
- Data were collected between October 1, 2007 and June 30, 2009.
- Records were from the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton, which provides services for mostly Marine and Navy families.

PARTICIPANTS

- A total of 3,882 depression screens were included in the analysis; 1,724 were completed at the initial visit, 1,058 were completed at the 28- to 32-gestational week visit, and 1,100 were completed at the six-week postpartum visit.
- Only medical records of spouses of an Active Duty Service member were included in the study.
- No additional demographic data is provided.

LIMITATIONS

- The analyses were limited to a single measure of depression and a single question regarding husbands deployment status, which may influence the results.
- Other factors that may have influenced results (e.g., demographics, medical history, etc.) were not assessed.
- The sample was from a single military hospital that had supportive programs for women in the prenatal and postpartum periods, likely limiting the ability to generalize the findings.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Systematically evaluate the effectiveness of maternal support programs to assess their effectiveness in reducing perinatal depression
- Utilize focus groups or individual interviews to more deeply explore the mental health challenges of military mothers during pregnancy
- Assess other factors related to Service member deployment (e.g., length, frequency) to consider their impact on their wives levels of depression

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>