BREASTFEEDING AND HEALTHY LIVING

Supporting Breastfeeding Mothers with Mental Health Issues

Studies have shown that women are more likely to suffer mental health disorders in the early postpartum period.

Following are resources health care providers and families can use to try to protect the breastfeeding relationship and avoid premature weaning if at all possible. These resources can help to support the mother, family and health care provider as they balance the needs of mental health services and treatment for the mother and the needs of the mother/baby breastfeeding dyad.

For Health Care Providers

- **Screening for Postpartum Depression:**
  The most commonly used tool to screen for Postpartum Depression is the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)
  [http://www.fresno.ucsf.edu/pediatrics/downloads/edinburghscale.pdf]. Screening of women in the postpartum period can be performed during postpartum or pediatric visits.

- **Information on medications and breastfeeding:**
  - Medications and Mothers’ Milk (2008 Edition) by Dr. Thomas Hale
  - Lactmed: [http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/htmlgen?LACT] A peer-reviewed and fully referenced database of drugs to which breastfeeding mothers may be exposed. Among the data included are maternal and infant levels of drugs, possible effects on breastfed infants and on lactation, and alternate drugs to consider.
  - Health Care Providers can access updates on antidepressants [http://66.230.33.248/discus/messages/43/43.html?1194448521] and other medications through forums in Dr. Thomas Hale’s website [http://66.230.33.248/cgi-bin/discus/discus.cgi?pg=topics]
  - Textbook of Human Lactation edited by Thomas W. Hale and Peter E. Hartmann, Chapter 30: “Antidepressants and Antipsychotics” states:
    “As with all maternal drug use during lactation, the questions that need to be asked are:
    (a) Is there significant drug transfer into milk,
    (b) Is drug exposure likely to cause any short-term toxicity in the infant, and
    (c) Is drug exposure likely to cause long-term adverse effects in the infant?”
• Additional resources and information:

• “Maternal Depression and Breastfeeding” – from the 2007 Women’s Health Grand Rounds of the University of Albany School of Public Health available via webstreaming at: http://www.albany.edu/sph/coned/bfgr07.htm (the handouts are also available at that website)
• University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Perinatal Depression Project: http://www.psych.uic.edu/clinical/HRSA/
• Health care providers may want to educate their patients about non-pharmacological ways to reduce maternal stress and depression, such as:
  o Exercise 2 – 3 times a week x 30 minutes (Lane et al, 2002)
  o Increasing intake of Omega-3s foods (Silvers and Scott, 2002)

Information for Patients and their families:

• MedEdPPD.org <http://www.mededppd.org/mothers/> (English or Spanish): is a Web site developed with the support of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to provide education about postpartum depression (PPD). This part of the site, Mothers and Others, contains information for women with PPD and their friends and families.
• Postpartum Support International <http://www.chss.iup.edu/postpartum> (available in English and Spanish): (PSI) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote awareness, prevention and treatment of mental health issues related to childbearing in every country worldwide.
• Postpartum Depression Foundation <http://www.ppdchicago.org> Our mission is to champion the need to educate, recognize, research and de-stigmatize the disease of women’s mental health complications associated with childbearing, particularly Postpartum Depression.
Examples of patient stories:

- When the Blues Arrive with Baby <http://www.lli.org/NB/NBMayJune04p84.html> by Nancy Williams, Santa Maria CA USA, From: NEW BEGINNINGS, Vol. 21 No. 3, May-June 2004, pp. 84-88

References:

- The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Protocol Committee; ABM Clinical Protocol #18: Use of Antidepressants in Nursing Mothers; Breastfeeding Medicine, Volume 3, Number 1, 2008.
- Section on Breastfeeding; Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the use of human milk: PEDIATRICS Vol. 115 No. 2 February 2005, pp. 496-506