

Family Connects Home-Visiting Program

Family Connects is a universal, nurse home-visiting program offered at no cost to all families with a newborn living in Durham County, North Carolina. Nurses provide 1-3 home-visits to support parents' strengths, identify infant needs, and connect parents to community resources as needed.

Introduction

Does a community connection lead to a change in postpartum depression scores among women who received a Family Connects nurse home-visit?

Postpartum depression is a serious public health issue for women in the United States. Untreated postpartum depression can negatively impact a woman's ability to care for herself as well as to care for her child. It is well documented that children of women who experience postpartum depression are more likely than other children to have poor behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and health-related issues.

The Family Connects nurse home-visiting program facilitates community connections to families of newborns based on nurse-identified family needs, with the goal of reducing child maltreatment and promoting healthy maternal and child health outcomes.

Methods

As part of a comprehensive assessment of mother and child health and well-being, nurses use the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Screener (EPDS) to screen for postpartum depression during home visits. The current study analyzed EPDS scores from two Family Connects randomized controlled trials in Durham, NC to examine the potential benefits of Family Connects community referrals on postpartum depression. The Family Connects nurse home-visitors screened women for postpartum depression at three weeks and again at six months.

Participants: A subset of 332 mothers who participated in Family Connects during RCT periods and subsequently completed an impact evaluation interview at infant age 6-8 months (omitted two mothers due to missing data).

- RCT 1: July 2009 – December 2010 (n = 200)
- RCT 2: January 2014 – June 2014 (n = 132)

EPDS Screener: A 10-item self-report ranging in scores from 0-30

- The cut-off score used to indicate possible clinical depression is >10

Results

Among the subset of 332 mothers:

- 31 screened positive for possible clinical depression during the infant home-visit
- 26 screened positive for possible clinical depression during the impact evaluation six months later

Among the subset of 332 mothers who exhibited possible clinical depression during the Family Connects home-visit:

- 23 did not exhibit depressive symptoms six months later
- 8 also exhibited depressive symptoms six months later

Family Connects IHV	Impact Evaluation		
	No Depression	Depression	Total
No Depression	281	18	299
Depression	23	8	31
Total	304	26	330

A mother who screened positive for possible depression during the infant home-visit who then scored negatively for depression six months later is negatively correlated with the receipt of one or more mental health referrals ($r = -.256$).

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

THREE WEEKS
Visits are scheduled around 3 weeks after your baby's birth

NO COST TO RECIPIENTS
As an eligible recipient, you will not be charged

REGISTERED NURSE
All visits are made by highly-trained nurses

FOR ALL
Helping all families, regardless of income or background



Conclusions

Mothers who exhibited depressive symptoms at the Family Connects home-visit and received a mental health referral were less likely to have a positive screen for depression six months later, which suggests that this community connection may decrease experiences of postpartum depressive symptoms.

The mothers who scored positively for depression on the EPDS at the infant home-visit and who received a mental health referral showed a two-fold decrease in depression scores on the EPDS six months later as compared to mothers who scored positively on the EPDS and who did not receive a mental health referral.

Group Statistics					
Mother Received 1+ Referrals to Mental Health Agency (1 = Yes)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
PPD Change Score IHV	.00	15	-4.8667	6.97820	1.80176
> 6 months	1.00	12	-8.8333	8.27739	2.38948

Depression is the leading cause of disability and disease burden among women, and the presence of postpartum depression both at the infant home-visit as well as six months after childbirth indicates a need to screen for postpartum depression in order to refer women to treatment options. Results suggest that short-term nurse home-visiting programs, like Family Connects, that assess postpartum depression and support connections to community services can be effective in reducing depressive symptoms in the postpartum period.