Mental Health and Pregnancy

Psychosocial Problems During Pregnancy (or multiproblem)

- Normative problems
- Psychological attitude toward pregnancy, motherhood
- Dealing with complications in pregnancy or with fetus
- Problems coping with future demands, interpersonal problems
- Substance use
- Mental disorders
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Prenatal Stress

Mother
- Physical changes
- Physiological changes
- Mechanical changes
- Hormonal changes
- Uncertainty
- Anticipation
- External demands
- Preparation

Fetus
- Constant growth
- Intrauterine milieu
- Changes with mother’s emotion and stress

Father
- Participation
- Need to support
- Uncertainty
- Anticipation
- External demands
- Preparation (Parentification)
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Normative Problems

Cultural prescriptions

Unplanned Pregnancy
Unwanted pregnancy
Adolescent pregnant
Fears about taking care of baby
Coping with demands and adjustments of pregnancy, preparations, parturition, etc.
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Attitude toward pregnancy or motherhood

- Negative attitude toward pregnancy
- Informal relationship
- Wish to terminate pregnancy
- Wish to give child for adoption
- Marked ambivalence
- Intense somatic complaints (hyperemesis, pain, hypertension)
- Fears of obesity, self-image, etc.
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Complications in pregnancy or with fetus

Coping with physical problems (Premature contractions, bedrest, bleeding)

Knowledge of problem in child (Malformation, illness)

Loss of pregnancy
  Miscarriage
  Stillbirth

Dealing with grief

Premature birth and health complications in parent or infant
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Problems coping with pregnancy

- Poor prenatal care
- Access to health care
- Poor weight gain
- Domestic violence
  (Emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse)
- Absence of partner support
- Absence of family support
- Severe poverty
- Homelessness

Interpersonal problems
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Substance use during pregnancy

- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Cocaine-crack
- Amphetamines
- Cannabis
- Opioids
- Other, including medications (e.g. anticonvulsants)

Effects on mother and fetus
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Mental disorder

- Unresolved grief. Complicated bereavement
  - Depression

- Mood disorder
  - Bipolar, Mania
  - Denial of pregnancy

- Psychosis
  - Other, Schizophrenia

- Anxiety dis./posttraumatic disorder
- Eating disorder
- Personality disorder. Dissociative disorder
High stress, anxiety, depression, violence, and substances can lead to high cortisol levels and high levels of norepinephrine, resulting in contraction of the uterine artery and less oxygenation. Fetal stress can affect behavioral organization and neuronal organization.
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High risk postnatal depression

Mother
- Episodes of depression
- Irritability
- Less responsive

Child
- More behavior problems (cry, sleep, feeding)
- Cognitive
- Behavioral effects (more for boys)

Partner
- Higher risk of depression

10-15% women
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Mania during pregnancy

- Less prenatal care. More careless behavior
- Substance use risk
- Less awareness of pregnancy
- Use of neuroleptics
- Use of electroconvulsive therapy
- Use of mood stabilizers
  - Lithium
- Risk of damage to the infant, if untreated
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**Pregnancy loss** 15% of pregnancies

- History of previous losses
- Worse effects the more advanced the pregnancy
- High risk of anxiety
  - Depression
  - Somatic complaints, somatization

**Psychosocial intervention**
- Grief work
- Involvement of spouse
- Psychosocial support
- Psychotherapy
Depression during pregnancy

16% risk first trimester onset

Risk
- First pregnancy
- History of loss
- Early loss of a parent
- Psychosocial stress
- Poverty. Apartment
- Negative response of husband to pregnancy

Psychosocial intervention. Recognition. Psychotherapy
Medication if necessary. SSRI
Provide psychosocial support. Continued intervention and monitoring
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Psychosis during pregnancy

- Etiology mostly biological
- Denial of pregnancy
- Poor prenatal care
- Risk for the infant

Increased pregnancy with deinstitutionalization

Intervention
Pharmacotherapy. Neuroleptic — E.C.T.
Mother-baby unit
Ability to care for self and baby. Compliance. Support system.
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**Anxiety disorder during pregnancy**

- Stress for mother and infant
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Fear of delivery
- Fear of taking care of baby

**Intervention**

- Psychosocial support
- Relaxation. Biofeedback
- Hypnnosis

May require anti-anxiety medication
Psychotherapy. EMDR. Cognitive and behavioral therapy
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**Multimodal interventions**

- Practical help
- Pharmaco-therapy or ECT
- Hospitalization

- Psychosocial support
  - Home visitation
  - Group intervention

- Cognitive-behavioral interventions
  - Help to cope
  - Psychotherapy

- Continued psychosocial intervention
  - Home visitation
  - Referral to specialized treatment
  - Family or couple therapy
  - Parent-infant intervention