Hospital costs associated with perinatal mental health diagnoses for Australian women

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Background: Previous studies reported hospital admission rates and length of stay related to depression in the perinatal period, but have not evaluated cost.¹ ² This analysis aims to measure hospital-related costs in women presenting with mental health morbidity in the perinatal period using available administrative databases.

Methods: NSW & WA birth and hospital admission data collections for women giving birth between July 2000 and December 2009 were analysed. The cohort was divided into three groups: Case women had >1 psychiatric admission within a perinatal period; Comparison 1 women had >1 psychiatric admission outside of any perinatal period; Comparison 2 women had no psychiatric admissions. Hospital separations were costed using national hospital cost data for 2009-2010 based on diagnosis-related group codes. Hospital costs were summed over the study period and analysed with a Generalised Linear Model with gamma distribution adjusted for covariates.

Results: Total mean hospital costs for Cases were significantly higher (P<0.001) than Comparison 2 with the difference in mean costs estimated at $15,223 [$15,049, $15,395]. Significant interactions were found with unmarried Cases having significantly higher costs ($7000) than married Cases. Cases without private insurance also had significantly higher costs than Cases with insurance.

Conclusion: Women with perinatal mental health diagnoses incurred significantly greater hospital costs than women without any mental health diagnosis. Lack of private insurance and unmarried status was associated with increased costs.