

Psychosocial and Psychological Interventions for Treating Postpartum Depression: An Updated Cochrane Systematic Review

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Objective: Many women experiencing postpartum depression are reluctant to take antidepressant medication due to concerns about breast milk transmission. Evidence-based, non-pharmacological treatment options are important. The objective of the study was to examine the effects of all psychosocial and psychological interventions compared with usual postpartum care in the reduction of depressive symptomatology among postpartum women.

Methods: We conducted a Cochrane systematic review and meta-analysis. We included all published, unpublished, and ongoing randomized controlled trials of psychosocial or psychological interventions where the primary or secondary aim was the reduction of depressive symptomatology. Two authors reviewed study quality and extracted data. Results will be presented using relative risk for categorical data and weighted mean difference for continuous data.

Results: Twenty-six trials met the inclusion criteria and reported outcomes for 2,756 women. Any psychosocial or psychological intervention, compared to usual postpartum care, was associated with a reduction in the likelihood of continued depression, however measured, immediately post-treatment. Both psychosocial and psychological interventions were effective in reducing depressive symptomatology. Interventions were more effective when delivered by professionals versus lay providers and when delivered individually versus in a group. However, effects were comparable whether interventions were delivered face-to-face or using technology and whether they were delivered in or outside of the home.

Conclusions: Despite limitations in the trials' methodological quality, the updated meta-analysis suggests that psychological and psychosocial interventions are an effective treatment option for women with postpartum depression. The long-term effectiveness remains unclear.