

Associations between unsettled infant behaviour, paternal depressive symptoms and anger: a community cohort study.

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Objectives/Background: Poor paternal mental health is associated with poor outcomes for children (1), and increased risk of harm (2), yet fathers' cognitions surrounding their unsettled infant, are largely unexplored. We examined unsettled infant behaviour and fathers' depressive symptoms, cognitions, and personal sleep, in a community cohort. **Methods:** Data were collected from 102 fathers at 4 and 6 months of infant age. Measures included report of infant sleep, crying and feeding problems, depressive symptoms, cognitions, and own sleep quality and quantity. **Results:** Sleep problems at 4 months were associated with increased depressive symptoms (adjusted mean difference 2.64 (1.27-4.00)), doubt (adjusted mean difference 1.82 (.40-3.25)), anger (adjusted mean difference 1.86 (.51-3.20)), poor personal sleep quantity (adjusted OR .21; 95% CI .09-.51) and quality (adjusted OR .20; 95% CI .08-.51); and at 6 months with increased depressive symptoms (adjusted mean difference 2.56 (1.28-3.84)), anger (adjusted mean difference 1.63 (.40-2.87)), poor personal sleep quantity (adjusted OR .14; 95% CI .05-.38) and quality (adjusted OR .28; 95% CI .11-.72). Crying problems at 4 months were associated with increased anger (adjusted mean difference 1.98 (.60-3.36)) and doubt (adjusted mean difference 1.55 (.05-3.05)); and at 6 months, with increased depressive symptoms (adjusted mean difference 3.04 (1.59-4.69)), anger (adjusted mean difference 2.73 (1.29-4.17)) and less personal sleep (adjusted OR .22; 95% CI .07-.71).

Conclusion/Discussion: Fathers of infants who remain unsettled at 6 months of age, are at risk for negative outcomes and require referral to appropriate support services.

Keywords: Unsettled infant, anger, fathers, depression

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