Development of a Scale to Rate Maternal behaviour among mothers with Postpartum Psychosis in Mother Baby units

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Objectives

Assessment of maternal behaviour is important in predicting risk and informing infant care plans both in the MBU and at discharge. There is only one scale - the Bethlem Mother Infant Interaction Scale that assesses risk and interaction; however it does not evaluate anxiety and reactions to separation or the ways in which a mother's psychopathology affects the mother-infant interaction.

Methods

Based on data from 100 mothers admitted in the Mother Baby unit, Bangalore, we developed a tool to rate different aspects of maternal behaviour in mothers admitted with postpartum psychosis. This tool is primarily meant to be used in a Mother Baby unit and uses multiple observations over a week and information from different informants for rating. It has six sections- Care for the infant's basic needs; Affectionate behaviour; Significant incidents; Overall assessment of safety; Handling separation from the infant and Psychopathology related to the infant.

Results

The scale has been found to have adequate inter-rater and test retest reliability. It has been pre-tested initially with 50 mothers and minor modifications have been made. The tool requires minimal training and can be used by doctors, nurses and other mental health professionals. We are currently establishing external validity using the Bethlem Mother Infant Scale and the subjective Postpartum Bonding instrument.

Conclusion

Based on initial data, the scale appears to have predictive validity in determining outcomes such as maternal behaviour at discharge and need for supervision or foster care.