

The course of depressive symptoms in Swedish fathers during the first postnatal years

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ABSTRACT

Objective/Background: Persistent depressive symptoms in new fathers has been linked with adverse effects on the child (1). The aim of the present study was to investigate the extent and course of depressive symptoms in Swedish fathers over the first two postnatal years and to identify factors associated with persistent symptoms.

Methods: A population-based sample of 885 fathers took part in a longitudinal study investigating postnatal depressive symptoms in Swedish mothers and fathers (2). Depressive symptoms in fathers was assessed with the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) at 3, 6 and 25 months postnatally. Regression models will be used to explore associations between more persistent symptoms and socio-demographic factors, including relationship and support variables.

Results: The point prevalence of depressive symptoms in fathers (EPDS score of 12 or more) was within the same range at the three time points 3, 6 and 25 months: 6.3%, 5.9% and 5.0% respectively. Of the fathers who scored high at 3 months, just under half still reported depressive symptoms at 6 months postnatally. Among those with depressive symptoms at 3 and/or 6 months, around one third reported symptoms when the child was 2 years old. Preliminary results from the analyses concerning factors associated with persistent symptoms of depression in fathers will be presented..

Conclusion/Discussion: The results, as well as possible implications concerning identification and support interventions to distressed fathers will be discussed.

Keywords: fathers, postnatal depression, course

References:

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