



Integrating perinatal mental health into primary health: the role of community midwife

1

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INTRODUCTION

2

- Perinatal mental health is an **important issue** for us all and it has been recognized as a **major public health concern**.
- There is a huge impact of mental health problems during the **perinatal period** (pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal)
- It has been highlighted by researchers, policy makers and service users **the need for improved care** in the area of perinatal mental health.
- **Community Midwives** can play significant roles in perinatal mental health promotion, the prevention of perinatal health problems and in the care of the women and their families.

Integration and community midwifery

3

- Integration will be more successful if perinatal mental health is incorporated into health policy and legislative frameworks and supported by senior leadership, adequate resources and ongoing governance.
- Community midwifery for perinatal mental health must be coordinated with a network of services at different levels of care and complemented by broader health system development.

Why integrate perinatal mental health into community midwifery?

4

Seven Good reasons!

1. The Burden of perinatal mental disorders is great



- High prevalence and wide societal effects of mental health problems during the perinatal period (Manning and Gregorie 2006, Cooper and Murray 2005)
- 20-30% women experience a mental health problem during pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal year.
- Postnatal depression rates between 13% in the first weeks to 20% in the first year after birth (Priest et al 2003).
- The profound effect of untreated postnatal depression to relationships, families and children has been well documented by a number of studies (Manning and Gregorie 2006, Cooper and Murray 2005)

2. Perinatal mental and physical health problems are interwoven.

- Many women during the perinatal period suffer from both physical and mental health problems.
- Integrated community midwifery services help ensure that women are treated in a holistic manner, meeting the perinatal mental health needs of women with physical disorders, as well as the physical health needs of women with diagnosed perinatal mental disorders.



3. The treatment gap for Perinatal mental disorders is enormous

- In all countries there is a significant gap between the prevalence of perinatal mental disorders and the number of women receiving treatment and care.
- The high human cost of perinatal mental illness has been highlighted by the Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths.
- The reports of the Enquiries highlighted a number of key areas where improvements in care may have prevented the deaths or reduced the risk.



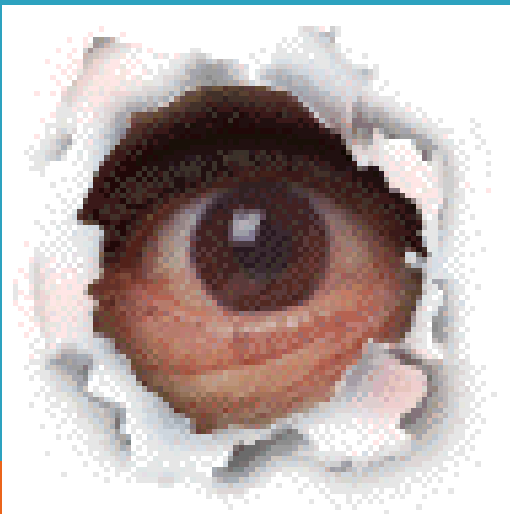
4. Community midwifery for perinatal mental health enhances access

- When perinatal mental health is integrated into community midwifery, women can access perinatal mental health services closer to their homes, thus caring for their newborn, keeping their families together and maintaining their daily activities.
- Community midwifery care for perinatal mental health also facilitates community outreach and perinatal health promotion, as well as monitoring during the whole perinatal period and more effective management of affected women.



5. Community midwifery for perinatal mental health promotes respect of human rights

- Perinatal mental health services in community midwifery care minimize **stigma** and discrimination.
- The woman will be cared by the community midwife in her own home, close to people she trusts, close to her baby and close to things that make her feel comfortable.
- The risk of human rights violations that can occur in psychiatric hospitals would be removed, if perinatal mental health services are delivered in primary care.



6. Community midwifery for perinatal mental health is affordable and cost effective



- Primary care services for perinatal mental health are less expensive than psychiatric hospitals, for patients, communities and governments alike.
- Women and their families could avoid indirect costs associated with seeking specialist care in distant locations.
- Treatment of common perinatal mental disorders is cost effective, and investments by governments can bring important benefits.
- Perinatal period is an important period for the promotion of mental health of women.

7. Community midwifery care for perinatal mental health generates good health outcomes

- The majority of people with mental disorders treated in primary care have good outcomes.
- Community midwifery can play significant role in **perinatal mental health promotion** (for example **antenatal classes**) , the **prevention of perinatal health problems** (postnatal **community midwifery home visiting**) and in the care of the women and their families.
- Evidence based effective Interventions for promoting perinatal mental health by community midwives are: antenatal classes, postnatal home visiting, breastfeeding classes etc.



Key Messages



- Perinatal mental disorders affect 20-30% (Watson et al, 1984) of women that are care by midwife, if left untreated, create an enormous toll of suffering, disability and economic loss.
- Despite the potential to successfully treat perinatal mental disorders, only a small minority of the women in need receive even the most basic treatment.
- Integrating perinatal mental health services into primary care is the most viable way of closing the treatment gap and ensuring the women get the care they need.
- Community midwifery for perinatal mental health is affordable, and investments can bring important benefits.

Key Messages



- Certain skills and competencies are required for community midwives to effectively assess, recognize, support and refer women with perinatal mental disorders
- Community midwives should be adequately prepared and supported in their work.
- Perinatal mental health is central to the values and principles of Midwifery; holistic women care will never be achieved until perinatal mental health is integrated to community midwifery care.

Key Recommendations

14

- All women should be routinely assessed in the antenatal period for history of mental disorder **by the community midwife**.
- Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale or other screening tools should form part of screening **by the community midwife**.
- Women identified **by the community midwife** as high risk of puerperal psychosis should receive psychiatric review.
- Interventions for promotion of perinatal mental health **by community midwife** (antenatal classes, postnatal classes, homevisiting) should be available for the women.
- Clear local guidelines and protocols for the detection and management of perinatal mental health problems should be developed.





THANK YOU!!!!