



Screen and Intervene: Assessing Knowledge, Preparedness, and Confidence in Managing Postpartum Depression

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ABSTRACT



Problem: Postpartum depression (PPD) is a mental health condition in which a new parent experiences intense and ongoing depressive symptoms such as sadness, anxiety, lack of energy, suicidal thoughts and actions, and guilt. One in seven people who give birth will experience PPD. Furthermore, suicide is a leading cause of death in the perinatal period, accounting for 20% of postpartum deaths. Though these mental health issues are common, there are many barriers to screening, managing, and treating PPD.

Purpose: The purpose of this project was to assess nursing students' and nurses' levels of knowledge and readiness to screen, intervene, and manage patients with PPD.

Approach and Methodology: This project was conducted at the Mount Sinai Phillips School of Nursing and the Mount Sinai Health System in New York, NY. Participants included nursing students, faculty, practicing nurses, and independent providers working on Labor and Delivery, Postpartum, Neonatal Intensive Care, or Mother and Baby units. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire and answered 31-item pre-test and 33-item post-test surveys, which both assessed participants' attitudes toward and knowledge of PPD identification and management before and after participating in the educational intervention. The intervention consisted of a video on a woman's experience with PPD and an educational slideshow on PPD identification, risk factors, screenings, management, and resources.

Findings: The sample included 38 participants, including 29 (76.3%) students and 9 (23.7%) registered nurses. Some data was omitted due to incompleteness. There was a statistically significant difference between the overall pre-test and post-test scores ($p < 0.001$, $t = 2.028$). Overall, 36 (94.7%) reported having been taught about PPD and 27 (71.1%) knew of at least one PPD screening tool. Among registered nurses ($n = 9$), five (55.6%) had been trained to use PPD screening tools, three (33.3%) knew about and use the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale, and three (33.3%) had been trained to counsel patients with PPD. The majority were not familiar with any free PPD resources in the area.

Conclusions and Implications: While nurses and nursing students are aware of PPD, more awareness of screening tools, training on how to use screening tools, and knowledge of resources for patients with PPD is needed. Comprehensive education and training on both the identification and management of PPD may improve overall attitudes and confidence in working with this population.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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