

Non-technical summary of: Humphreys, J., Obeney-Williams, J., Cheung, R.W., Shah, N. (2016) Perinatal psychiatry: a new specialty or everyone's business? BJPsych Advances 22(6), 363-372.

Summary of content:

This article is aimed towards clinicians that deal with mental health in the community and in the hospital, as well as for medical students. Perinatal psychiatry is a branch of psychiatry that deals with mental health surrounding childbirth, and has very serious outcomes for both parents and children. 'Perinatal' refers to the period immediately before, during, or after birth. Until quite recently, perinatal psychiatry was not considered its own specialty. With more recent advances in research and clinical care, as well as society being more open to discussing mental health surrounding childbirth, several perinatal units were set up. The North East London NHS Foundation Trust is a pioneer of these special 'Mother and Baby Units' that allow mothers to be admitted with their babies to receive care without mothers having to spend a long time separated from their newly born child. This article reviews the current state of perinatal psychiatry, key clinical features of it, and what treatment is currently available, with some considerations about how to tackle issues in the future. Case studies are also described to give an illustration of how mental health issues during pregnancy might present.

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