Resource Column

Web Resources that Address Psychiatric Disorders in Pregnancy

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Abstract

Psychiatric disorders occur at every life stage, including pregnancy. This resource column highlights several Web resources that may be useful to childbirth educators and other health care providers who may care for pregnant woman experiencing one of these conditions.

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Psychiatric disorders occur at every life stage, including pregnancy. Pregnancy can evoke many emotions in women and, in severe cases, may result in emotional problems. It is quite common and natural for pregnant women to have concerns about their ability to be a mother and how they will manage financial, relationship, and sexuality issues. If a woman does not have a good relationship with her own mother, she may experience additional feelings regarding her own role as a mother. Women who have a history of abuse can also experience extreme reactions during pregnancy and birth.

While pregnancy can bring to the forefront many new emotions for women, it can also present a challenge to women with various existing psychiatric disorders. Generally speaking, women who are taking psychiatric medications will continue to do so during pregnancy; often, their pregnancy is not discovered until after the period of embryogenesis is over. In some cases, a woman may discontinue medication use on her own, or her physician may recommend that she do so. Women who discontinue medication or switch to new medications may be particularly at risk for problems as symptoms return and medication adjustments are made. Pregnancy

can also alter the breakdown of medications and can influence bioavailability, absorption, and excretion, which may affect a woman's reaction to them.

The purpose of this Web resources column is to highlight some Web sites that address psychiatric disorders during pregnancy. Childbirth educators may have women with these conditions in their classes; thus, the column is meant to serve as a resource where information can be obtained. Two of the Web resources (Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Women's Mental Health and Reproductive Mental Health: Psychosis) may be appropriate for consumers with a high reading level.

Benefits and Risks of Psychiatric Medications during Pregnancy

- <http://www.aafp.org/afp/20020815/629.html>

This Web site is a link to an article in *American Family Physician*, the official journal of the American Academy of Family Physicians. The authors of the paper and their affiliations are listed at the beginning of the text. The article originally appeared in the August 15, 2002, issue of the journal. The site includes a link to a patient handout that is available for download using Portable Document Formatting (PDF). The patient handout was developed by the paper's authors and is noted to be 8 pages long.

The article is succinct and easy to read. Tables are included and easy to scan. Information is included on structural teratogenesis, behavioral teratogenesis, perinatal syndromes, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's risk categories, and risks of specific agents including antidepressants, benzodiazepines, mood stabilizing agents, and antipsychotic agents. Individualized treatment is categorized by disease type. The article also includes general guidelines for making decisions about using pharmacologic agents during pregnancy.

Overall, the article is medically oriented but provides good information for childbirth educators, nurses, and other health care providers. References are included, along with author information, funding source (none), and conflicts of interest (none).

Complications of Pregnancy in Women with Schizophrenia

- http://www.indegene.com/Psy/Jour/indjour_AGP_Sum_01-06-2001_2.asp

This Web site summarizes an article that was originally published in June 2001 in *Archives of General Psychiatry*. The summary is included as part of the Indegene database of medical information. Through this service, the summary can be emailed to others and one can participate in discussions about the summary, print the summary, or conduct a search. The summary is brief and includes the following sections: how the study was conducted, what the findings were, conclusions, and comment. The name of the author who created the summary for Indegene is listed at the bottom. This site also includes links to the main Indegene page, which includes the member agreement, privacy policy, disclaimer, and a link to the Webmaster.

Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Women's Mental Health

- <http://www.womensmentalhealth.org/topics/pregnancy.html>

This Web site contains the following main sections: general information, clinical program, how to set up an appointment, and research program. There is a link to *Major Depression during Conception and Pregnancy: A Guide for Parents and Families*, which is available for printing. This resource includes the following main categories:

- What is a Major Depression?
- Depression during Pregnancy: Special Issues
- Treatment while Trying to Conceive
- Treatment in the First Trimester
- Treatment during the Second and Third Trimesters
- Medications Used to Treat Depression
- A Special Word about Depression and Psychosis

The Massachusetts General Hospital Web site also includes an ask-a-question feature, patient support services, patient stories, and letters from other women. The home page of the site is mainly a resource for locating providers and services. The women's health library links to articles on a variety of topics relevant to women's mental health, including various types of depression, medications, and treatment during pregnancy. Other ar-

ticles are reprints from journals such as *OB/GYN News*, *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, and the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*. A “current interviews” section includes questions and answers relevant to patient scenarios. Some of the patient scenarios include medication use during pregnancy and lactation.

Psychiatric Disorders Across the Female Reproductive Cycle

- <http://www.psych.uic.edu/education/courses/m2psypath/psychopathology/>

This Web site is a link to a PowerPoint slide presentation by a physician who is an associate professor of clinical psychiatry and Chief of the Women’s Division at the University of Illinois at Chicago. A biographical sketch of her work is available. The home page includes a table of contents of the slides. Users can click on the slide of their choice or view the whole show. Each of the 42 slides contains a few brief statements. The slide presentation was prepared on March 15, 2001.

Reproductive Mental Health: Psychosis

- <http://www.bcrmh.com/disorders/psychosis.htm>

This Web site is sponsored by the British Columbia Reproductive Mental Health Program in association with Providence Health Care and St. Paul’s Hospital. It is an easy-to-read page that highlights the following main sections:

- Incidence of Women Who Experience Psychosis during Pregnancy

- Incidence of Women Who Experience Postpartum Psychosis
- What is Psychosis?
- Risk Factors
- Signs and Symptoms Experienced by Women with Psychosis
- Reasons Why Women Should Seek Treatment
- Treatment Options (including a brief description of biological, psychological, and social approaches)

The site provides a link to “Use of Antipsychotic Medication in Pregnancy and Postpartum.” The site also includes a “What’s New?” section, links to other reproductive problems (e.g., infertility), support services, a reading room, women’s personal stories, a section for comments, and a list of other helpful Web sites. A link is provided to the British Columbia Reproductive Mental Health Program home page.

Treatment of Bipolar Disorder during Pregnancy

- <http://www.mhsource.com/bipolar/bppreg.html>

This Web page is part of a larger site called “The Bipolar Disorders Treatment Center.” The page was written by a physician and provides a short biographical sketch of the author. The Web page includes brief but detailed paragraphs related to the treatment of bipolar disorder during pregnancy. The site is highly medical. References are included. The site was last updated in March 2001. Links are available to the Web master and other sections of the main Mental Health InfoSource page (www.mhsource.com). The site is sponsored by CME, Inc., an independent provider of medical continuing education in the United States.