Understanding barriers to help-seeking and developing innovative strategies for perinatal depression in Chitwan

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Depression is the most common mental disorder \(^1\)

- 4.9-12% suffer from postnatal depression in Nepal \(^3, 4, 5\)
- Suicide is the leading cause of death among women in reproductive age in Nepal \(^6\)

(Source: \(^1\)Marcus et al., 2012; \(^2\)Weissman & Olfson, 1995, \(^3\)Clarke et al., 2014; Ho-Yen, et al., 2006; \(^4\)Regmi et al., 2002; \(^5\)Suvedi et al., 2009)
Gap

Perinatal Depression

Imperative to treat depression early

Detection & Treatment

Uncommon in low and middle income countries
Gap

Service uptake is low even when effective treatment is available.

Research Questions

• What are the factors impeding help-seeking for women with perinatal depression?
• What interventions are required to promote help-seeking?
Methods (Objective 1)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)
- Psychosocial Counselors (n=5)
- Health Workers (n=13)
- Female Community Health Volunteers (n=16)

Screening with EPDS (Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale)
- 36/293 screened positive (6 refused; 3 withdrew interview)

In-depth Interviews (n=26)
Qualitative Findings

- None of the women had sought care for their depressive symptoms at the health facilities.
- Only a few women in our study had ever sought help (2/26) for their depressive symptoms.
- Major barriers related to helpseeking were on knowledge regarding the causes, condition and services.
Barriers to help seeking

Knowledge about Causes

Conventional Thoughts
- Caused by sinful acts, bad luck, fate

Religious beliefs
- People believe that it happened because the gods are angry "devi deuta risako" or ancestral gods are angry "kul risako" when their problems grow severe.
  - FGD with Health worker
**Barriers to help seeking**

**Knowledge about the Condition**

- Not a health problem
- Rather personal rooted in social and economic problems
- Does not require treatment

**Coping**

- Seek support

“I didn’t know that I should go to hospital when I have tension or worries. I thought that one goes to hospital only when s/he is sick. I didn’t know that.”

– IDI with postnatal woman
Barriers to help seeking

Knowledge about Services

Availability of Services
- Services are only available for physical health problems

Types of services
- Not aware about psychosocial intervention

Fear of being prescribed medicine - harmful for pregnancy
Barriers to help seeking

- Loose mind “dimag fuskeko”
- Mad “baulaha”
- Loser “kehi garnu nasakne”
- Psycho

**stigma**

/stɪˈmɑː/  
noun

1. a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person. "the stigma of mental disorder"

Delayed Help seeking (Reluctant to disclose and seek service)
Recommendations

• Community based awareness programs
• Early detection and referral at the community level
• Separate package for maternal mental health
• Formation of support groups
Development of interventions (Objective 2)

Community Sensitization Manual
Definition, Causes, Symptoms, Myths and Facts, Role of family

Community Informant Detection Tool
Prioritization of symptoms and vignettes development

1 day workshop with health workers (n=12), counselors (n=2)
Reviewed by psychiatrist
Finalization of interventions
Final intervention

Antenatal depression
Sabina is six months pregnant. For the past two months, she has looked depressed and has not been able to enjoy anything. Most of the time, she prefers staying alone and feels irritated upon hearing others talking to her. She complains of having pain in different parts of her body and feels tired most of the time. Despite having difficulty carrying out daily household chores, she is expected to take care of everything. She feels that her family does not understand her problem thus, feels frustrated with her life. When all these things overtake her, she feels restless and wants to run away from all the responsibilities. She has not been able to sleep and has been eating less than usual. She thinks that there is nothing she can do in her life and cries almost every day. Sometimes she thinks it is better for her to die than to live.

Observation

Questions
A1. Does this narrative apply to the person you are talking to now?
- No match (description does not apply)
- Moderate match (person has significant features of this description)
- Good match (description applies well)
- Very good match (person exemplifies description, prototypical case)

A2. Do the problems have a negative impact on daily functioning?
- No
- Yes

A3. Does this person want support in dealing with these problems?
- No
- Yes

Results: (Total score of items A1, A2 and A3)

Postnatal depression
Binita is from a poor family and has just given birth to a daughter for the second time. It is just a few weeks after delivery, she looks depressed throughout the day. She has not been able to stay happy even after giving birth. In the same way, she feels guilty for not being able to give birth to a son and make her family happy. Most nights she has not been able to sleep thinking about these things because of which she feels tired and lazy during the day. Binita used to be very energetic, but nowadays, she feels weak and has not been able to carry out her household chores. Similarly, she also feels irritated to look after the newborn baby and gets angry easily with anyone. These days she stays alone most of the time, doesn’t eat well and doesn’t maintain her personal hygiene. Because she could not do anything as she had imagined, she thinks there is no reason for her to live.

Observation

Questions
A3. Does this narrative apply to the person you are talking to now?
- No match (description does not apply)
- Moderate match (person has significant features of this description)
- Good match (description applies well)
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A3. Does this person want support in dealing with these problems?
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Results: (Total score of items A1, A2 and A3)
Final intervention

Table 6: Adaptation of Community sensitization manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adapted Version</th>
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<td>(The titles in Bold indicate where changes have been made; the Bold, and italics text briefly describes the changes)</td>
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1. Introduction
   - Background
   - Introduction to the manual
   - Content of the manual
   - Process of community sensitization programme

2. Psychosocial Concepts (30 minutes)
   - What is psychosocial?
   - Psychosocial wellbeing and problems
   - Causes of psychosocial problems
   - Symptoms of psychosocial problems (symptoms added)
   - How to identify psychosocial problems
   - Cultural expressions of psychosocial problems (cultural expressions added)
   - Evaluative question: What do you understand by psychosocial?

3. Mental Health Concepts (changed from 1.5 hours to 2 hours)
   - Mental Health
   - Mental Health problems
   - Causes of mental health problems
   - Symptoms of mental health problems
   - Myths and facts about mental health problems (few myths and facts about mental health and perinatal depression added)
   - Types of mental health problems
     - Depression
       - Case Vignette (from CIDT)
       - Introduction to depression (Definition revised in the workshop)
       - Causes of depression (Few common causes from the workshop added)
       - Symptoms of depression (Few common symptoms from the workshop added)
       - Perinatal depression (This sub section was added)
       - Case Vignette (from CIDT)
       - Introduction to perinatal depression (Definition derived from the workshop)
       - Causes of perinatal depression (Common casual factors were added as a result of the qualitative study and the workshop)
       - Symptoms of perinatal depression (Common symptoms were added as a result of the qualitative study and the workshop)
     - Alcohol Use Disorder
       - Case Vignette (from CIDT)
       - Introduction to alcohol use disorder
       - How to identify people with alcohol use disorder?
       - Causes of alcohol use disorder
       - Symptoms of alcohol use disorder
     - Epilepsy
       - Case Vignette (from CIDT)
       - Introduction to epilepsy
       - Causes of epilepsy
       - Symptoms of epilepsy
     - Psychosis
       - Case Vignette (from CIDT)
       - Introduction to psychosis
       - Causes of psychosis
       - Symptoms of psychosis

4. Stigma (10 minutes)
   - Impact of stigma on wellbeing
   - How to tackle stigma? (includes some practical strategies that can help)

5. Treatment (20 minutes)
   - Role of family to help people with mental health problems (Findings from the literature review and workshop added)
Conclusion

• Lack of knowledge about the problem and its treatment, and stigma associated to mental health are major barriers to low help-seeking.

• Community sensitization and perinatal depression specific detection tools can help bridge this gap.

• Both the strategies have had positive outcomes in creating demand of mental health services.

• Culturally adapted taking in to consideration the local experiences.

• Future research can focus on the evaluation of effectiveness of developed interventions.

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