

## Statement affirming the importance of perinatal depression screening in BC

**The BC Reproductive Mental Health program and Perinatal Services BC encourage all primary care, maternity care, allied health, and public health professionals seeing individuals in the perinatal period to continue to use the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale ([EPDS](#)) to screen for depression.** We do not agree with the recent recommendation against such screening<sup>1</sup> by the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care (CTFPHC). A detailed letter to the editor explaining our concerns, which we wrote in collaboration with perinatal mental health organizations, clinicians, and researchers across Canada, was submitted to CMAJ Open.<sup>1</sup>

### Key Points:

- Evidence in support of screening for perinatal depression is very robust. The EPDS is the global gold standard for perinatal depression screening in both clinical care and research, and has been demonstrated repeatedly to be reliable and valid.<sup>2-7</sup> It is a screening tool, not a diagnostic tool, and can be used to facilitate a nuanced conversation between patient and provider.
- We disagree with the CTFPHC conclusion that the evidence in support of instrument-based screening for perinatal depression is very uncertain. Our position aligns with the conclusions of the US Preventive Services Task Force and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) that there is evidence in favor of screening for depression in the perinatal period.<sup>8-11</sup>
- It is our opinion that there is a greater potential for harm of not screening than there is of screening, particularly for marginalized populations. The use of evidence-based tools for universal screening promotes equity in identifying perinatal mental illness in communities across BC. We emphasize that the CTFPHC acknowledged that “no evidence was found on the harms of screening in our systematic review”. Further, the patient values and preferences engagement studies conducted by the CTFPHC<sup>12</sup> highlighted that participants felt that the potential benefits of screening outweigh the potential risks, which they characterized as trivial: “Generally, participants were not overly concerned with false positives, overdiagnosis or overtreatment, as they felt treatment decisions would be separate from screening decisions, and any impacts from false positives or overdiagnosis would be resolved quickly.” (p. 15).
- Suicide is a leading cause of maternal deaths.<sup>13-16</sup> Screening for depression and facilitating connections to community supports needs to be a priority to prevent maternal suicide and reduce serious maternal and child harms associated with untreated depression in the perinatal period.

BC Resources:

- [Reproductive Mental Health program](#)
- Reproductive Mental Health program provider consult: RACE Line at **+1 877-696-2131**
- [Perinatal Services BC Maternity Care Pathway](#)
- [Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale](#), including translations

Pacific Postpartum Support Society	Provides online and telephone/ Zoom support to pregnant and postpartum women.	<a href="http://postpartum.org">http://postpartum.org</a>
Adapt Clinic	Genetic counselling at the Adapt Clinic is for anyone of any age who has a diagnosis of a mental health or psychiatric disorder, or for anyone with a family history of mental health issues.	Call <b>604-875-2726 / 604-875-2000 x. 6787</b> or go to: <a href="http://www.bcmhsus.ca/our-services/genetic-counselling-(the-adapt-clinic)">http://www.bcmhsus.ca/our-services/genetic-counselling-(the-adapt-clinic)</a>
Maternity and Babies Advice Line (MaBAL)	Resource for rural and remote First Nations communities.	<a href="https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/maternity-and-babies-advice-line">https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/maternity-and-babies-advice-line</a>
MotherToBaby	Fact sheets regarding safety of medications during pregnancy and breastfeeding	<a href="https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/">https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/</a>
310-Mental Health Support	Call for emotional support, information and resources specific to mental health	<b>310-6789</b> (no area code needed)
Alcohol & Drug Information and Referral Service	Call for resources and support related to alcohol and substance use.	<b>1-800-663-1441</b> (toll-free in B.C.) or 604-660-9382 (in the Lower Mainland)
BC Crisis Centre	Call if you are considering suicide or are concerned about someone who may be.	<b>1-800-SUICIDE</b> (1-800-784-2433)

This statement was developed collaboratively by the BC Reproductive Mental Health Program and Perinatal Services BC; working group members Dr. Deirdre Ryan, Dr. Marianne Morgan, Dr. Catriona Hippman, and Prescilla Carrion.

### Further Reading:

BC response to the 2013 recommendation of the CTFPHC against universal depression screening, including for the perinatal population:

BCMHSUS (RMH) & PSBC, 2014, Consensus statement: Screening for depression in the perinatal period in BC revisited. Accessed on Oct. 20, 2022, at <https://reproductivementalhealth.ca/resources>.

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2. Levis, B., Negeri, Z., Sun, Y., Benedetti, A. & Thombs, B. D. Accuracy of the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) for screening to detect major depression among pregnant and postpartum women: systematic review and meta-analysis of individual participant data. *BMJ* **371**, (2020).
3. Tsai, A. C. *et al.* Reliability and validity of instruments for assessing perinatal depression in African settings: systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS One* **8**, (2013).
4. Owora, A. H., Carabin, H., Reese, J. & Garwe, T. Summary diagnostic validity of commonly used maternal major depression disorder case finding instruments in the United States: A meta-analysis. *J Affect Disord* **205**, 335–343 (2016).
5. Shafian, A. K., Mohamed, S., Nasution Raduan, N. J. & Hway Ann, A. Y. A systematic review and meta-analysis of studies validating Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale in fathers. *Heliyon* **8**, (2022).
6. Fellmeth, G. *et al.* Validated screening tools to identify common mental disorders in perinatal and postpartum women in India: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Psychiatry* **21**, (2021).
7. Park, S. H. & Kim, J. I. Predictive validity of the Edinburgh postnatal depression scale and other tools for screening depression in pregnant and postpartum women: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Arch Gynecol Obstet* (2022) doi:10.1007/S00404-022-06525-0.
8. O'Connor, E., Rossom, R. C., Henninger, M., Groom, H. C. & Burda, B. U. Primary Care Screening for and Treatment of Depression in Pregnant and Postpartum Women: Evidence Report and Systematic Review for the US Preventive Services Task Force. *JAMA* **315**, 388–406 (2016).
9. Myers, E. R. *et al.* Efficacy and Safety of Screening for Postpartum Depression. *Report 106* (2013).
10. ACOG Committee on Practice Bulletins--Obstetrics. ACOG Committee Opinion No. 757: Screening for Perinatal Depression. *Obstet Gynecol* **132**, e208–12 (2018).
11. Draft Recommendation: Screening for Depression and Suicide Risk in Adults | United States Preventive Services Taskforce. <https://uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/draft-recommendation/screening-depression-suicide-risk-adults>.
12. Burnett, L. *et al.* Patient preferences for depression screening during pregnancy and the postpartum period: phase 2 data summary. (2019).
13. Boutin, A. *et al.* Database autopsy: An efficient and effective confidential enquiry into maternal deaths in Canada. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada* **43**, 58–66 (2021).
14. Jago, C. A., Crawford, S. G., Gill, S. J. & Gagnon, L. Mental Health and Maternal Mortality – when new life doesn't bring joy. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada* **43**, 67-73.e1 (2021).
15. Knight, M. *et al.* Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care - Surveillance of maternal deaths in the UK 2012-14 and lessons learned to inform maternity care from the UK and Ireland Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths and Morbidity 2009-14. A report of MBRRACE-UK. [https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/downloads/files/mbrrace-uk/reports/MBRRACE-UK Maternal Report 2016 - website.pdf](https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/downloads/files/mbrrace-uk/reports/MBRRACE-UK%20Maternal%20Report%202016-%20website.pdf) (2016).
16. Grigoriadis, S. *et al.* Perinatal suicide in Ontario, Canada: A 15-year population-based study. *CMAJ* **189**, E1085–E1092 (2017).