

Developing and Piloting a Self Management Program in a Mother and Baby Unit

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Introduction: Postnatal depression (PND) is a major health issue that affects 10 to 15 percent of all childbearing women internationally, having adverse consequences on the woman, child and family (Beck, Records & Rice, 2006; Hendrick, 2003). Despite extensive documentation on the prevalence and detrimental effects of PND, the treatment literature is limited and does not address the complex bio-psycho-social nature of PND (Boath & Hanshaw, 2001).

Objective: To establish the effectiveness of self-management as a complex intervention in the area of PND through the development and pilot testing of a self-management program at a mother and baby unit.

Methods: A three phase study based on the Medical Research Council (2000) framework for the development and evaluation of complex interventions. Phase one involved theory building through a review of self-management literature. In phase two qualitative data was collected from women who had experienced PND and perinatal mental health experts. This data was combined with self-management literature to inform the development of the pilot program. The third phase involved a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test to evaluate the effect of the pilot program on self-efficacy, empowerment and satisfaction.

Results: Pre-test post-test results demonstrated a significant improvement in self-efficacy ($p=0.035$), autonomy ($p=0.018$), expression of anger ($p=0.014$) and control ($p=0.004$). Qualitative reports indicated that the program improved communication, support, realistic expectations and participation, which is the focus of this presentation.

Conclusion: The study successfully established the preliminary findings for the effectiveness and role of self-management in the treatment and management of PND. The results warrant further investigation into self-management and other complex interventions that address the multifactorial nature of PND.

Relevance to Occupational Therapy: Self-management is built on a client-centred partnership that promotes empowerment and self-efficacy, inherent philosophies of occupational therapy. The study established a preliminary evidence base for self-management and occupational therapy within perinatal mental health whilst outlining a method to assess other complex interventions that are intrinsic to occupational therapy.