

# beyondblue launches new resources to help health professionals identify and treat depression in pregnant women and new mums

One in seven new mothers and almost one in 10 pregnant women experience depression

Postnatal depression affects one in seven new mothers and almost one in 10 pregnant women

experiences antenatal depression. Anxiety disorders are believed to be even more common.

Today, the Minister for Mental Health, The Hon. Mark Butler launches a new set of free

beyondblue information resources aimed at primary care health professionals, including maternal,

child and family health nurses, to help them detect and discuss depression, anxiety and other mental

health problems with pregnant women and new mothers.

The resources are based on the NHMRC-approved, Clinical Practice Guidelines beyondblue

developed in 2011 for the treatment of depression and related disorders of anxiety, bipolar

disorder and puerperal psychosis in the perinatal period.

In addition, beyondblue has undertaken research with General Practitioners, obstetricians,

midwives and maternal, child and family health nurses about their perceptions, experiences,

responses and perceived barriers to detecting, diagnosing and responding to antenatal and

postnatal depression and anxiety.

beyondblue CEO Kate Carnell AO said: "Health professionals are asking for reliable and

accessible information and training on mental health disorders during the perinatal period. There

are many health professionals in this field who are at the frontline and are in a good position to

recognise and respond to women presenting with depression and anxiety, and we rely on them to

refer these women to their GPs for treatment."

The latest Depression Monitor survey, conducted every two years by beyondblue, shows that 20

per cent of the population believe that postnatal depression is a normal part of life, while 39 per

cent said they believed depression to be a normal part of pregnancy.

beyondblue Deputy CEO and General Manager of the Perinatal program, Dr Nicole Highet

said: "It is not normal to be depressed during pregnancy. Our research tells us that around 75 per

cent of Australians think that both pregnant women and new mothers should be checked for signs of depression as they are currently screened for other problems that might occur, such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

“These new resources will provide health professionals with easily accessible information about depression, anxiety and related disorders during pregnancy and the first year following birth. We hope that this will result in more women being checked, more symptoms being detected and more women getting the help they need,” she said.

Ms Carnell said: “This is important not only for the women, but their families too. Research has linked PND to higher rates of emotional, cognitive and behavioural problems in children which can persist through their teenage years. It is imperative that women who are showing signs of depression and anxiety are treated quickly and effectively in a non-stigmatising, caring environment.”

The new resources complement a free, accredited online training program which is also based on the Guidelines and which almost 2,500 health professionals are undertaking to improve their ability to recognise, treat and manage these conditions in pregnant women and new mothers.

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