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Poster Presentation Abstract

Have I got PND? A thematic analysis of an online forum for antenatal/postnatal depression.

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Objective/background: Research has shown that online forums for various health conditions including perinatal mental health can provide social support. However, little is known about perinatal mental health online forums or the information exchange and healthcare behaviour that occur in these forums. This study aimed to explore the topics women discussed and healthcare decision-making on an online forum for perinatal mental health.

Methods: 102 historic threads from the antenatal/postnatal depression section of an online forum were subject to thematic analysis and common themes were extracted.

Results: Three major themes were identified (1) Symptoms (2) Healthcare professionals (3) Treatment. The majority of women disclosed symptoms on their first post and often sought advice on diagnosis, whether or not they should contact a healthcare professional, how to interact with healthcare professionals and treatment. Nearly all the replying posts urged women to contact their healthcare providers and often reassured women who had concerns in approaching healthcare professionals. Women were frequently encouraged to honestly disclose their symptoms to healthcare professionals and take the treatment they recommended. Antidepressants were the most discussed treatment option.

Conclusion/discussion: Healthcare professionals could recommend quality online perinatal mental health forums to their clients that may help women recognise their symptoms, encourage them to seek professional help and provide experiential knowledge on treatment options.