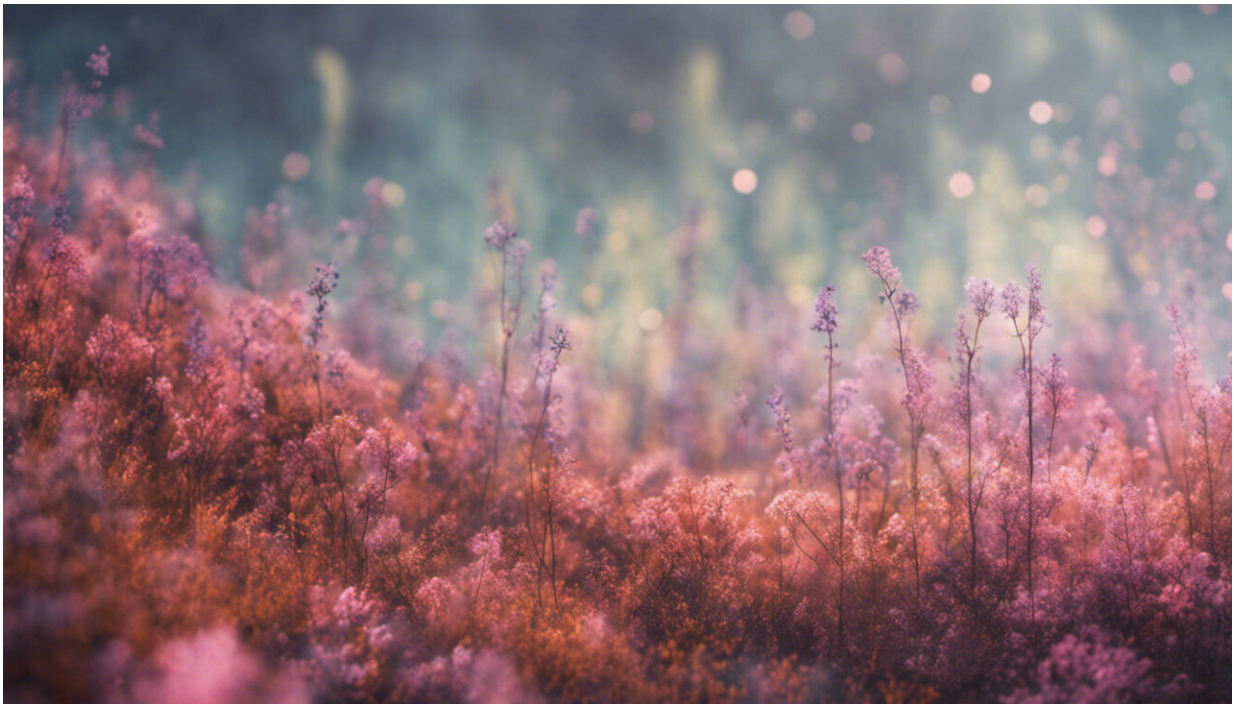


Mental health screening measures needed to identify parents and children at risk

October 10 2017



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

A new study from City, University of London has identified screening measures which have the potential to spot mental health problems in parents during pregnancy and when their children are young.

The review, which is published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* and

funded by the NSPCC, highlights that these measures have the potential to identify the significant proportion of parents and children at risk to enable appropriate prevention and treatment, avoiding possible long-term negative impacts of such conditions on children's development and associated costs to society.

The findings, which come ahead of World Mental Health Day on 10 October, analysed 183 studies and identified particular measures which have the most potential as a measure of parental mental health.

In particular, two screenings measures – known as the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale and Self-Report Questionnaire – were seen to offer the best global measures when looking at the mental health of men and women with children aged between 0 and five years of age. Both of these measures are already well-established, and as such, could be easily used in clinical settings.

However, while the review identified effective screens, further work is needed to see if other measures of general [psychological distress](#) in early years parenting populations offer promise for both mothers and fathers. As identification of valid and reliable measures can help enable effective screening for perinatal distress and potentially prevent any long term negative impact of parental mental health problems.

Professor Susan Ayers, co-author of the study and a Professor of Maternal and Child Health at City, University of London, said:

"It is important to ensure that there are valid and reliable measures available to enable effective screening of parental mental health and wellbeing in the early years and to help prevent any long term negative impact of parental mental health problems. Valid [screening](#) tools will enable parental [mental health problems](#) to be identified early through universal services, such as maternity and primary care services. We hope

that through identifying promising measures this will help identify parents who need help""

Lucy Morton, Senior Development & Impact Manager at NSPCC, said:

"At the NSPCC we know that early intervention and support for parents who may be affected by mental health challenges is absolutely crucial. We were pleased to support this study as understanding grows about the potential [impact](#) of parental mental [health](#) on children. It's clear that further research is needed to fully understand what interventions and support measures are most effective, and we will continue to work with partners so that we can help improve the availability and quality of what's currently available for young families across the country."

Provided by City University London

Citation: Mental health screening measures needed to identify parents and children at risk (2017, October 10) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-10-mental-health-screening-parents-children.html>

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