

Nurses key to spotting postpartum depression in new moms

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Nurses can be trained to detect postpartum depression in new mothers

and could be crucial in spotting the condition early, researchers report.

[Postpartum depression](#) affects about 15% of new moms and can cause persistent sadness, fatigue, feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness, and trouble sleeping or eating. Some women with the condition struggle to care for their baby.

Hospitals have been urged to implement postpartum depression screening and referral programs, and a new quality improvement study from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles concluded that nurse training and education is key to successfully screening for postpartum depression.

"Training that helped nurses get comfortable with the topic of depression and to develop a non-judgmental attitude and openness to a patient's questions and concerns is critical," said principal investigator Eynav Accortt, director of Cedars-Sinai's Reproductive Psychology Program.

"Our [research](#) also revealed that framing the screening as part of the medical center's commitment to family wellness, as opposed to only using the term 'depression,' was helpful. It allowed us to normalize the challenging transition to parenthood these patients often experience," Accortt said in a [hospital](#) news release.

The findings came from a review of data on more than 19,500 women who gave birth at Cedars-Sinai.

Even though nurses are often on the front lines of screening programs for postpartum depression, nursing schools rarely require training in mental health screening or education.

"We recognized that we needed to do a better job identifying patients at risk before they went home from the hospital," said senior study author

Dr. Sarah Kilpatrick, chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Cedars-Sinai.

"We learned that it is a complicated process requiring dedicated collaboration between [nurses](#), physicians and information technology personnel to make the system work," Kilpatrick said in the release. "Our [framework](#) should be reproducible in other hospitals, thus helping even more families recognize and better manage [postpartum depression](#)."

The study was published recently in the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology–Maternal-Fetal Medicine*.

More information: For more on postpartum depression, see the [U.S. Office on Women's Health](#).

Eynav Elgavish Accortt et al, Implementing an inpatient postpartum depression screening, education, and referral program: a quality improvement initiative, *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology MFM* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ajogmf.2022.100581](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajogmf.2022.100581)

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