

Threats of COVID-19 caused significant anxiety and depression in pregnant women

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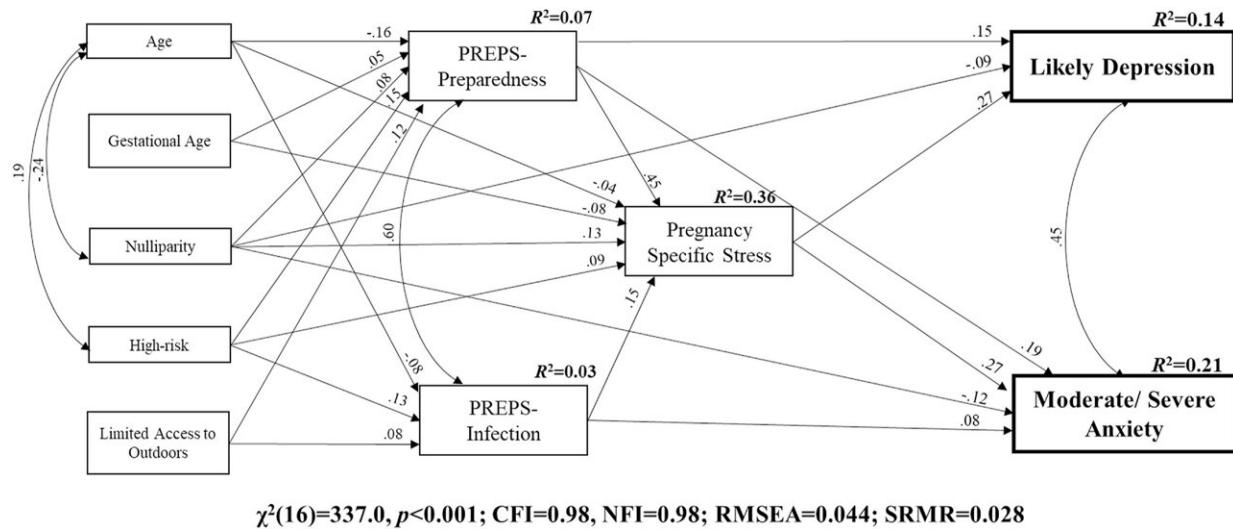
A study that assessed stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms in pregnant women from seven Western countries during the first major wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (April 17 to May 31, 2020) shows that

stress from fears about COVID-19 led to anxiety and depressive symptoms above normal levels. Led by Stony Brook University Professor Marci Lobel, Ph.D., the findings are part of the International COVID-19 Pregnancy Experiences (I-COPE) Study and are published in *Social Science & Medicine*.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had unprecedented impact on [public health](#), including mental health, and has affected social and economic conditions of people worldwide. The onset of the pandemic was especially stressful for [pregnant women](#) because of the initially unknown effects of the virus on fetuses, and because [prenatal care](#) and labor and delivery practices were greatly altered. The I-COPE Study is the first major research project to compare [stress](#) and mental health in pregnant women across these Western countries.

The study involved 8,148 pregnant women (on average about 27 weeks pregnant) from the United States, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Poland, Italy and Israel. While the countries varied in magnitude of pandemic-related pregnancy stress—likely because of [cultural differences](#) and the specific impacts of the pandemic in each country—[anxiety and depressive symptoms](#) among the cohort were strongly predicted by pandemic-related and pregnancy-specific stress—a result the authors found was replicated within the individual countries.

"Our findings show that the stress experienced by pregnant women predicted more frequent anxiety and depressive symptoms, including symptom levels above clinically defined thresholds for poor mental health," explains Lobel, Director of I-COPE, and a Professor in the Department of Psychology and the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Medicine at the Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University.



Structural equation model predicting prenatal mental health outcomes in seven countries during the COVID-19 pandemic onset. Note: All paths are significant at p

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