Social media program helps ease symptoms of postpartum depression

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For mothers with postpartum depressive symptoms, a social media-based

parenting program leads to more rapid declines in depressive symptoms but does not affect responsive parenting, according to a study published online Feb. 21 in *Pediatrics*.

James P. Guevara, M.D., M.P.H., from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and colleagues enrolled 75 women with mild-to-moderate depressive symptoms who were randomly assigned to a social media -based parenting program plus online depression treatment or depression treatment alone for three months. Sixty-six women completed the study.

The researchers found a more rapid decline in depressive symptoms for the parenting group versus the comparison group (adjusted Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale difference, −2.9 at one month). No significant group-by-time interactions were seen for the Parent-Child Early Relational Assessment, Parenting Stress Index-Short Form, or Parenting Sense of Competence scores. Of the women, 41 percent sought mental health treatment for worsening symptoms or suicidality. Greater parenting responsiveness was observed for women in the parenting group who exhibited greater engagement or reported mental health treatment.

"Social media may be an important platform to provide parenting support for women with postpartum depressive symptoms when in-person participation is difficult, but greater attention to participant engagement and ensuring and accounting for mental health treatment are needed to improve parenting outcomes with social media-based parenting programs," the authors write.

Guevara invented the Parent With Depression Program that is the subject of this study.

More information: James P. Guevara et al, Social Media-based Parenting Program for Women With Postpartum Depressive Symptoms:

An RCT, *Pediatrics* (2023). DOI: 10.1542/peds.2022-058719

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