

Emergency department see more infants of mothers with depressive symptoms

April 3 2024, by Elana Gotkine



Infants with mothers with depressive symptoms have higher overall and nonemergent emergency department use, according to a study [published](#)

in the April issue of *Health Affairs*.

Slawa Rokicki, Ph.D., from Rutgers University in Piscataway, New Jersey, used [birth records](#) linked to hospital discharge records for 2016 to 2019 to examine the association between perinatal depression severity and infant emergency department use and charges in the first year of life.

Rokicki found that infants with mothers with mild or moderate/severe [depressive symptoms](#) had significantly higher overall and nonemergent emergency department use, but not significantly higher emergent emergency department use, compared with infants who had mothers with no symptoms. The [positive associations](#) were particularly striking for [infants](#) with Medicaid.

"Perinatal users of the emergency department, particularly those who screen positive for depression, are likely to be a high-risk, socially vulnerable population, who may have concerns about disclosure of depressive symptoms, judgment from providers, and loss of parental rights," Rokicki writes.

"Therefore, emergency department policies for depression screening need to follow patient-centered, nonstigmatizing approaches and be linked to a case management system to address underlying social determinants of health."

More information: Slawa Rokicki, Perinatal Depression Associated With Increased Pediatric Emergency Department Use And Charges In The First Year Of Life, *Health Affairs* (2024). [DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2023.01443](https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2023.01443)

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