

## **Title : Perinatal depression in adolescent mothers : a public health concern**

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### **Abstract**

#### **Introduction and objectives**

Each year in Belgium, about 4% of all children are born by teenage mothers. Due to the high frequency and co-occurrence of vulnerabilities, teenage mothers are at higher risk of perinatal depression than adults mothers.

We performed a review of the literature investigating the epidemiology of adolescents mothers' depression, compared these data to adult mothers and listed associated factors, to develop a more preventive approach and specific follow-up.

#### **Methods**

The review is based on Pubmed and Sciencedirect research combining “adolescent” or “teenage” and “depression” as keywords.

#### **Results**

Seventeen international studies were included, evaluating both prenatal (6 studies) and postnatal (14 studies) depression with 3 different scales (CES-D, BDI, EPDS). Depression rate in adolescents mothers varies from 26 to 63% in the third trimester of pregnancy and from 26 to 61% in the first 3 months postpartum, with differences depending of studies designs, screening instruments and cutt-offs. Depression rate declines with time, but still persists with a prevalence ranging from 21 to 32% at 4-5 years after delivery. Depression rate in adolescent mothers are globally twice higher than in adult mothers, both in prenatal and postnatal periods. Characteristics associated with adolescent mothers depression include socio-demographic factors (less education, low income), psychosocial factors (confidence, self-esteem), poor or inadequate social support and negative life events (violence exposure, history of abuse).

#### **Conclusion**

Perinatal depression in adolescent mothers is very high and can contribute negatively to child-mother interaction. It should be a priority to screen depression early during pregnancy and to offer appropriate support services during the first years of motherhood. Moreover, it could be of high interest to assess maternofetal attachment during pregnancy using validated instruments combined with depression scales.

### **Keywords**

Perinatal depression ; adolescent mothers ; risk factors ; prevention

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