ANTENATAL THERAPY DECREASES DEPRESSION AND WORRY SYMPTOMS

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The effects of depression and worry on the pregnant woman and her unborn baby are an increasing concern. Treatment can decrease harmful symptoms, but pregnant women and careproviders are often reluctant to use medications. Therefore, we need research of non-pharmacologic treatment options.

Methods: We invited pregnant women to participate in an 8-week therapy group (either mindfulness-based (MB) or interpersonal therapy (IT)) facilitated by an experienced psychologist. We collected depression, worry, and sociodemographic data on admission to the group, at the end of the group, and again one month postpartum. We subsequently matched and compared the women to 60 women who had participated in a longitudinal study of perinatal depression (age, gestation, marital status, education, medications) from the same community. We wanted to know if: 1) participating in a therapy group decreases depression and worry over the course of pregnancy into the postpartum? and 2) there was a significant change in depression, stress, and worry symptoms for the treatment group compared to a control group?

Findings: Data were available on 39 women who had completed 6 groups (4 MB and 2 IT). Women who participated in either group showed significant decreases in depression ($p < 0.001$) and worry scores ($p < 0.001$) compared to control group. Women in the MB groups complained of less stress postpartum than the IT group, otherwise the groups were similar. Women who were unmarried had significantly higher depression scores ($p < 0.0001$).

In summary, participating in relaxation therapy groups can significantly lessen depression and worry symptoms over pregnancy and into the postpartum.