

Hello all,

My name is Adele Jansen and I am a Year 9 student. For my IB MYP Community Project, I have chosen to raise awareness for male postpartum depression in the general community. Due to COVID-19, my original plan of action (a seminar) was unfortunately cancelled, and in order to continue through I chose to write an article about the topic which I requested to be put in this Vine Newsletter Issue. By reading this, you are helping benefit my action and the quality of service. Once you have finished, it would be greatly appreciated if you could fill out the feedback survey via this link < <https://forms.gle/6QvRxqmfrJwE89tj9> > to help me in analysing my action and writing my reflection.

Background:

Postpartum depression (PDD), also known as postnatal depression, is a serious medical condition and mood disorder which affects 1 in 10 mothers after delivery. However, although mainly affecting women, males are also vulnerable to this increasingly growing condition. Despite growing cases and concern, male postpartum is recognised significantly less worldwide juxtaposed to its female counterpart because of multiple factors, which include misdiagnosis, lack of understanding of the condition and the consequential influence of society.

Symptoms:

Due to lack of research, the exact cause of male postpartum is unclear, but approximately between 2 and 25 percent of men are affected worldwide, and almost 11 percent display signs of depression starting from the first trimester until the first six months after birth, which is equivalent to 1,000-4,000 new fathers globally every day. Symptoms can have mild to severe psychological impact on the individual's mental health and can range anywhere from hopelessness and sadness which can last up to weeks, anxiety and low-self esteem due to the thoughts of being a substandard parent or the pressing concern of being judged by others. Physical symptoms are also apparent, such as weight loss or gain, impulsivity, fatigue, insomnia and/or lost ability to sleep, increased loss of interest in personal hobbies or work, and being easily stressed. Changes in behaviour, thinking and relationships are also common signs, and in severe cases thoughts of planned suicide can become pronounced. Fathers who have a previous history of mental illnesses, domestic conflict or trauma, limited emotional and/or practical support or financial stress are more at risk of contracting the condition.

Treatment:

In recent years, the condition has emerged socially with treatment, where options include the usage of antidepressants, counselling or support from mental health professionals. Individual or group therapy is also a common yet effective method of treatment as it provides fathers with the opportunity to express their worries and concerns in an environment which others can understand through similar circumstances. Self-help treatment is also a resource with practices such as regular exercise, yoga, healthy eating and meditation such as mindfulness and, are typically recommended ways to help reduce symptoms. Even though treatment is available, only a small percentage of males suffering from the condition actually undergo treatment. Within the larger percent, cases are usually undiagnosed, under-diagnosed and/or untreated for mental health deficiencies. Society's ever-present perception of gender is also a factor which has caused debate, with many modern societies viewing males as assertive, powerful and tough, whereas women are deemed as quiet, compassionate and vulnerable. Because of this discernment, many men may not have the confidence to ask for help and support and therefore feel isolated and alone, just like the stigma of this condition.

Conclusion:

By further working to make this condition more apparent in society, we, as individuals, can advocate and promote the issue by talking about the causes, symptoms and treatment without leaving it unacknowledged. In today's day and age, mental health is becoming more important and apparent, and like it's female equivalent, male postpartum depression deserves recognition to ensure the best of future parents and families to come.