SMS Support for Regional and Rural Parents Experiencing Perinatal Mental Health Challenges

Initiative Type

Model of Care

Status

Deliver

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https://clinicalexcellence.qld.gov.au/improvement-exchange/sms-support-regional-and-rural-parents-experiencing-perinatal-mental-health

Summary

Short Message Service (SMS) mental health promotion and prevention messages are a non-intrusive, cost-effective way to provide support to parents experiencing moderate to severe mental

health challenges in the perinatal period, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Key dates

Jan 2017

Sep 2018

Implementation sites

Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service and Townsville Hospital and Health Service.

Partnerships

Health Service Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (QCPIMH) and the University of Newcastle Family Action Centre.

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Aim

Use of mobile phones to send information and resource weblinks to parents with perinatal mental illness.

Benefits

- Encourages patients, partners and families to look after their mental wellbeing.
- Provides a platform for delivering important information, resources and access to support in areas where it may be scarce.
- Information can be read when convenient, allow confidentiality and avoid potential stigma.

Background

The SMS4Parents research project in rural and regional Queensland tested the feasibility of using mental health promotion and prevention text messages with new mothers diagnosed with perinatal mental illness and their partners. The trial was run for 12 months and involved approximately 67 couples from across the Darling Downs and Townsville regions, with the cooperation of the Perinatal Adult Mental Health Services. Parents could receive text messages from 26 weeks of pregnancy until their baby was 6 months old.

Solutions Implemented

Text messages are delivered to participant’s mobile phones, encouraging parents to look after their mental health, identify ways to connect with their infant and provide links to assistance information and resources.

Evaluation and Results

Feedback from participants to date indicates the messages are relevant, are supportive, contain relevant and useful information, and normalise the pregnancy and new parenting experience. The message content and theme in particular, were reported to be timed well according to weeks of pregnancy and following the birth of a baby until the baby was six months old. Many participants reported the messages would be very helpful and useful for all new parents.

Lessons Learnt

SMS Messages are an effective and efficient method of delivering important information and support for expecting and new parents who are at risk of or experiencing mental health issues and are isolated.

References

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Further Reading

Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service News

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