

Speak Up When You're Down

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES EVENT COVERS PERINATAL MOOD DISORDERS FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE

(Trenton, NJ) Research into the behaviors and factors that contribute to a variety of prenatal and postpartum mood disorders and management skills that can help women recover were the subjects of a seminar sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services in partnership with Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative and Hudson Perinatal Consortium. The conference was held on Wednesday, June 15, 2011 at the Pines Manor in Edison, NJ.

The event, entitled *Perinatal Mood Disorders: Co-Morbidities, Management & Recovery* was open to all New Jersey social workers, nurses, mental health providers, postpartum support group facilitators, and other professionals who care for women throughout their childbearing years.

Presenters included Mary Jo Codey, former New Jersey First Lady, postpartum depression survivor and advocate for mental health recognition and treatment, Katherine Stone, postpartum depression survivor, advocate and creator of Postpartum Progress, the most widely read blog on postpartum depression and other mental illnesses related to childbirth; and experts from renowned universities and medical centers, such as University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Weill Cornell Medical Center, Postpartum Depression Day Hospital at Women and Infants Hospital of Rhode Island, and St. Louis University.

Conference topics included teaching patients self-management strategies for prenatal and postpartum emotional health, reproductive and psychiatric outcomes of pregnancy and eating disorders, partner abuse in perinatal women involved in psychiatric treatment and psychopharmacology in the perinatal period.

New Jersey has been on the forefront in developing resources to help women with PPD and other PMDs. Four years ago, New Jersey enacted the first law in the nation requiring all hospitals and birthing centers to screen new mothers for PPD. New Jersey is the only state in the nation to mandate this type of screening.

In 2005, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) launched a comprehensive public awareness campaign entitled *Speak Up When You're Down* to educate consumers and healthcare professional about PPD and other PMD.

Resources include an informational website, www.njspeakup.gov, which provides resources and written and video testimonials of women who suffered with PMD along with stories from partners and other family members. In addition, the 24/7 toll-free telephone helpline – 1-800-328-3838 – helps with general questions and information about treatment services, support groups and referrals to counseling.

Additionally, in an effort to educate New Jersey women about the signs and resources available for treating PMD, informational palm cards are being distributed throughout the state. The 2,000 locations include hair and nail salons, spas, day care centers, nursery schools, restaurants and other retail locations.

PPD and other PMDs affect one in every 8 to 10 women. In New Jersey alone, between 11,000 and 16,000 women suffer from PPD every year, but many people do not know the facts. Any woman who has recently had a baby, ended a pregnancy, or who has stopped breast-feeding, can be affected by PMD. The disorders usually occur within the first year after childbirth, miscarriage or stillbirth, but the signs of depression can also appear earlier – when a woman is pregnant, or even planning to be. An estimated 10 to 20 percent of women develop a mood disorder during the period including pregnancy and up to one year after delivery. Only 1 in 1,000 experiences a rare illness called postpartum psychosis.

Symptoms of PMDs include:

- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Changes in appetite
- Feeling irritable, angry or nervous
- Feeling exhausted
- Not enjoying life as much as in the past
- Lack of interest in the baby
- Lack of interest in friends and family

PMDs can be serious, but they are treatable. Help is available, and it is important that a mother gets the support and treatment needed to recover from the effects of PMD so she can enjoy her baby.

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