

# Maternal depression from pregnancy to postpartum and emotional/behavioural difficulties in children

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I read with a great interest the prospective observation by Woolhouse et al. (2015) which indicated that maternal depressive symptoms at 4 years postpartum are associated with increased odds of child emotional/behavioural difficulties. Their findings also suggested a pressing need to rethink an extended mental health surveillance and support up to at least 4 years postpartum. I am afraid that the children with emotional/behavioural difficulties also have increased odds of mental disorders in their pregnancy and/or postpartum.

Recently, perinatal depressive symptoms have been observed to be mostly preceded by mental health problems that begin before pregnancy, in adolescence or young adulthood (Patton et al, 2015). In my institute in Tokyo, Japan, the parents of these women sometimes also seemed to have mental disorders, especially in poor households. The mental development of the women complicated by perinatal depression might have been harmed before their adolescence because they might have grown up in the households with high stress due to poverty and/or their parents were with mental disorders. Although Japan may be believed to be not a poor country, there are some poor and/or morbid parents with child-rearing difficulties; however, the assistance of the Japanese government for these parents seems to be insufficient. I am concerned

that the children of women with perinatal depression and/or economic problems have increased odds of mental disorders in their adolescence, young adulthood, pregnancy and/or postpartum. Adequate economic, mental and educational support is required for these women with perinatal depression to prevent the negative chain.

## Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflict of interest** The author declares that he has no competing interests.

## References

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