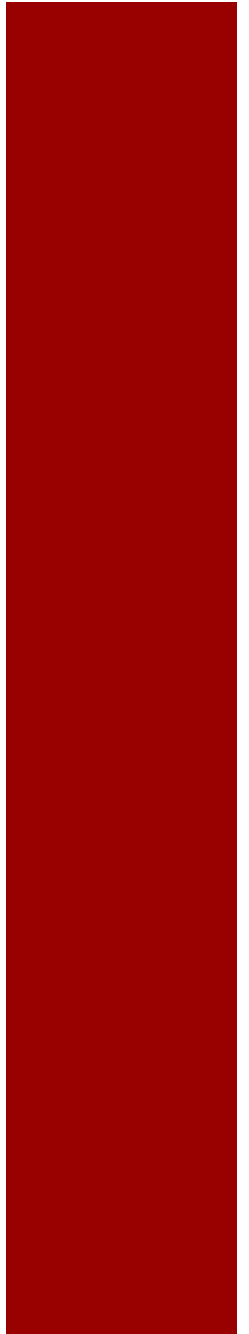


Fathers: their psychosocial and support needs in pregnancy and after birth

Philip Boyce

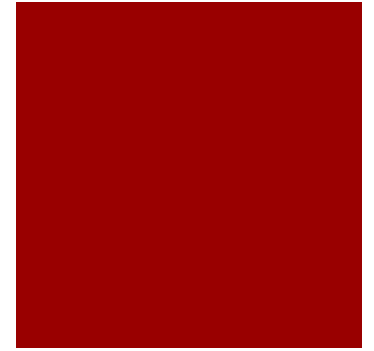
Sydney Medical School – Western

University of Sydney



Men and becoming a father

- Changing role for men
 - Expectations of involvement
- Stress and fatherhood
- Men and 'postnatal' depression
- Coping with a partner with postnatal depression



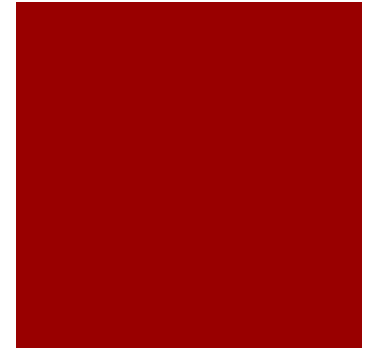


Changing role

- Expectation of men to become involved
- Lack of role models
 - Disengaged fathers
 - Competing role models – machismo
- Lack of symbolism
 - No baby showers
- Managing competing roles
 - Work – life balance
 - Financial pressure



Fathers being present at the birth



- Unfamiliar territory
 - Powerless
 - Seeing blood / medical procedures
- Helplessness
 - Having to observe pain
 - Not able to 'do' things
- Feelings of guilt
- Potential threat to life –
 - Acute stress disorder
- Limited opportunities to debrief

Changing role

- Expectation of men to become involved
- Lack of role models
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Changing roles



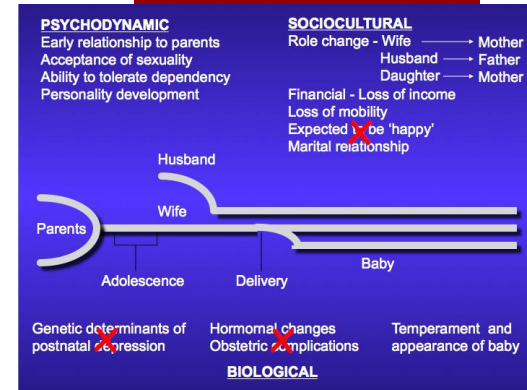
The perinatal period - impact on men



- Psychosocial stresses for men during the transition to parenthood
 - Role change
 - Change in intimate relationship - from two to three person relationship
 - Jealousy, rejection etc
 - Reallocation of household responsibilities
 - Providing care to the infant & separation anxiety
 - Work stresses - financial pressure
 - Change in social networks
 - Loss of independence

Depression in new fathers

- High rates of psychological morbidity among partners of women with PND
- Postnatal depression is predominantly psychosocial in origin
- Men will be confronted with similar psychosocial stresses to women
- Theoretically expect that there would be an increase in depression/anxiety on the transition to fatherhood



The First-Time Fathers Study: a prospective study of the mental health and wellbeing of men during the transition to parenthood

John T. Condon, Philip Boyce, Carolyn J. Corkindale

Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry 2004; 38:56–64

- Longitudinal prospective study of 312 first-time fathers
- Participants recruited when the women were pregnant
- Assessed the mental health, well-being and lifestyle of men in pregnancy and at 3, 6 and 12 months postpartum

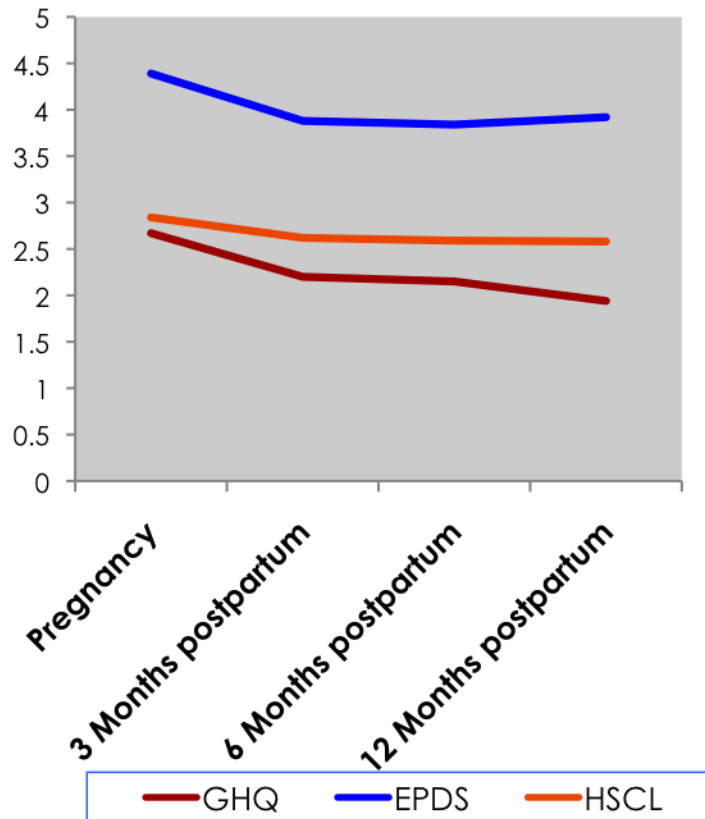
Adjustment of men to transition to fatherhood



- If the psychosocial model holds, then men should experience high level of distress* manifest as:
 - Increase in levels of depression
 - High rates of 'depression' equivalent behaviours
 - Increased substance misuse
 - Increased violence
 - Acting out
 - Excessive working

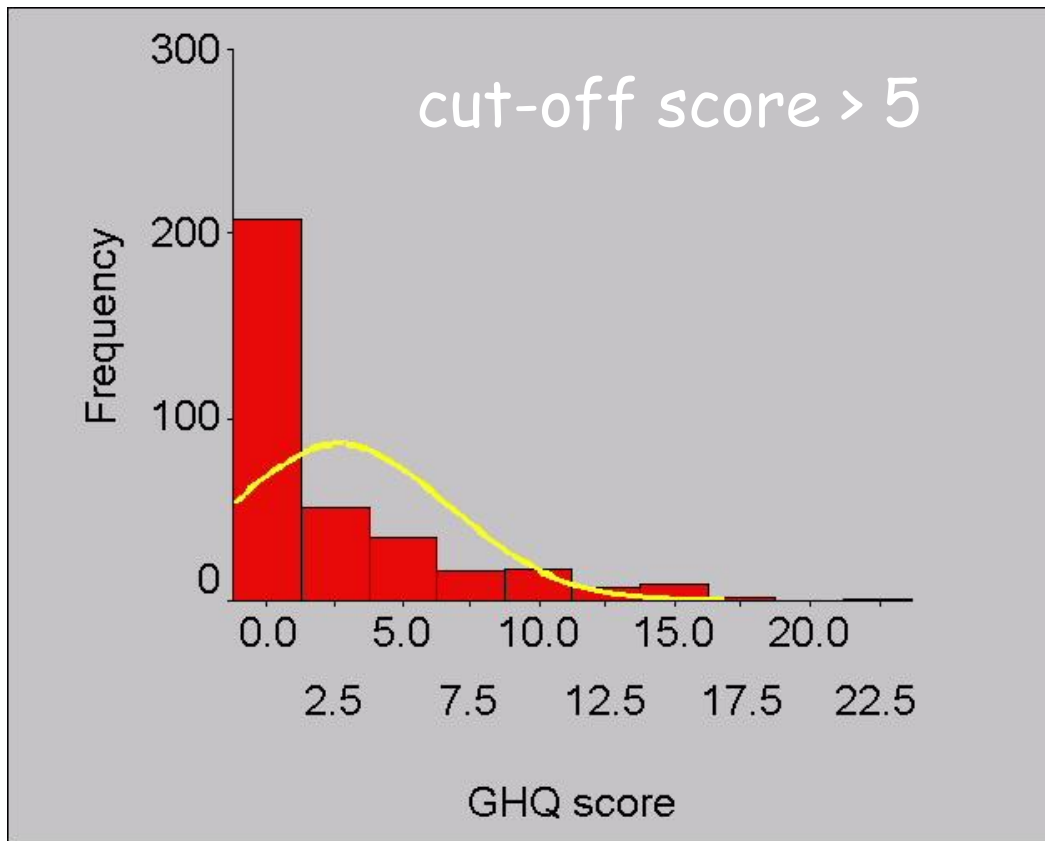
**For the majority of men there will be an improvement in wellbeing and role fulfillment*

Men and psychological distress over perinatal period



- No increase in psychological distress postpartum
 - Men don't get 'postnatal' depression
- Overall improvement in psychological symptoms over perinatal period
- Highest level of distress during pregnancy

General Health Questionnaire



Non-cases 285 (82%)

Cases 63 (18%)

Distressed fathers

The 'cases' identified during pregnancy were characterised by:

- High levels of psychological symptoms
- High alcohol use
- Marital dissatisfaction
- Poor social support
- Immature ego defences
- Poor knowledge / expectations of labour.



Men's distress, knowledge and planning



	Cases	Non-cases	OR
Unplanned pregnancy	50.9%	35.3%	1.9
Unclear birth expectations	30.9%	20.6%	1.7
Negative folklore	28.8%	8.8%	3.8

Distressed men and PND

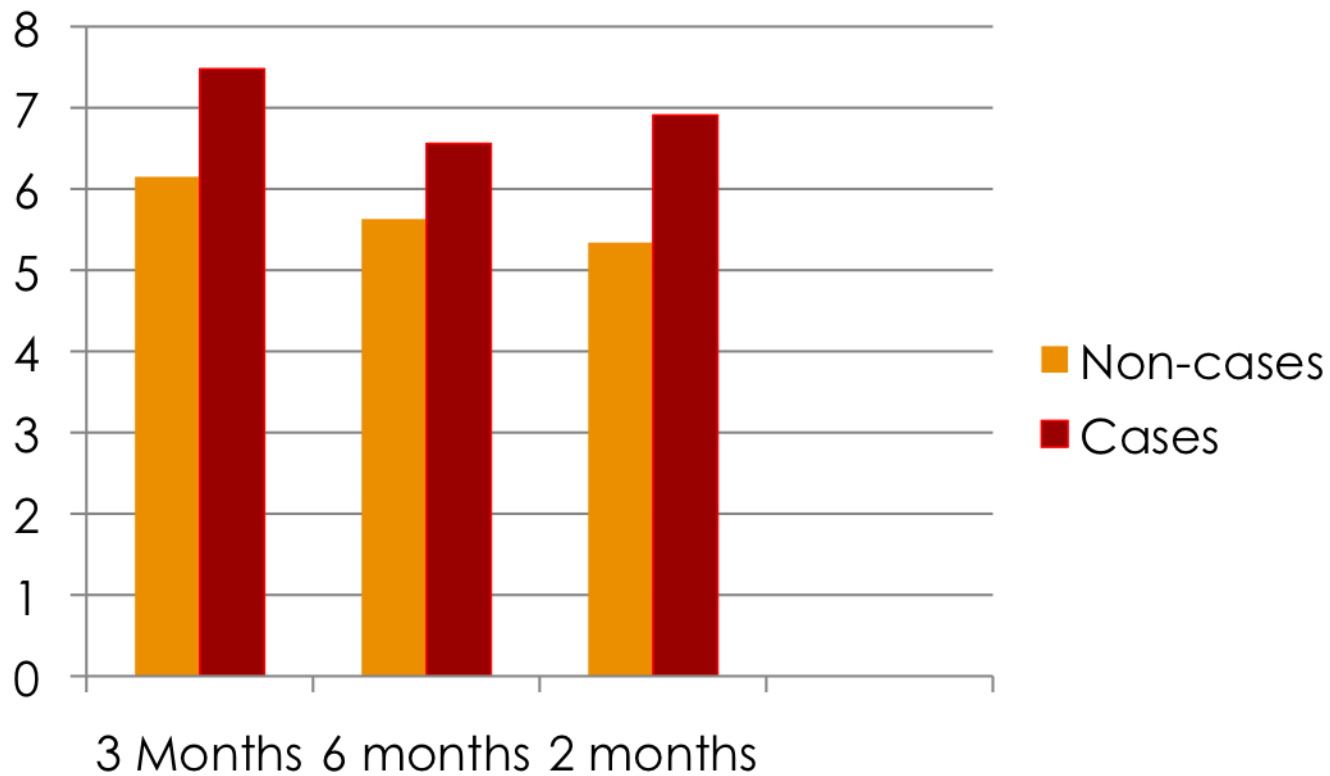


- The women in this study completed the EPDS at 3, 6 and 12 months postpartum

Cases of PND (EPDS > 12)

3 months postpartum	5.7%
6 months postpartum	5.0%

EPDS scores in the women



Risk of postnatal depression over the first six months postpartum and the men's' attitudes towards pregnancy and childbirth

	OR	95% CI
Negative attitude to birth	1.71	0.21-13.85
Negative expectations of birth	3.75	1.51-9.31
Little/no information about birth	4.01	1.55-10.37
Little/no perceived advantages of breastfeeding	2.27	0.96-5.35
Prenatal Questionnaire total	2.71	1.15-6.41

Regression Analysis

- Stepwise multiple regression with EPDS total at 3 months as the dependent variable
- Final model:

Predictor	Beta	t	p
Humour	-.20	-2.41	<.05
Projection	.19	2.25	<.05

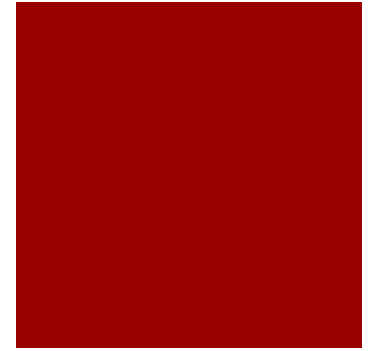
- $F(136,2) = 6.91, p < .001, R^2 = .09$

Men's contribution to PND



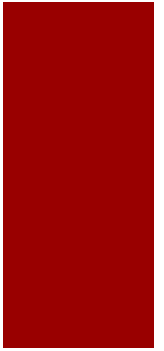
- Perceived marital disharmony by the men is associated with postnatal depression in their partners
- Postnatal depression is associated with women whose partners have negative attitudes towards childbirth and insufficient information
- Postnatal depression is associated with women whose partners use immature defenses
- In a regression analysis postnatal depressive symptoms is associated with ego defenses characterised by low sense of humour and projection
- Antenatal prevention of postnatal depression need to take into account the role of a woman's partner in addition to her own risk factors

Relationships in perinatal period



- Relationship difficulties are a major risk factor for PND
- Depression maintained by relationship difficulties
- When depression arises without significant psychosocial risk
 - Increase in problems with relationship
 - The relationship becomes collateral damage

Collateral damage and postpartum depression



Woman

- Symptoms of depression
 - Withdrawn
 - Demanding
 - Irritable
 - Resentful
- Managing family / household
- Loss of support

Partner

- Response to symptoms
 - Confusion - bewilderment
 - Withdrawal
 - flight into work
 - Anger
 - Alcohol / drugs
 - Resentment
- Family / household demands
- Work – financial pressure
- Lack of supports



Fathers

- The perinatal period is stressful for men
- The stress can have a negative impact on men
- ...and affect the way his partner copes
- When women have PND it can have an impact on the man & their relationship
- Attending to the men's needs is important in the comprehensive management of perinatal disorders
- ...and lead to well adapted fathers necessary for a child's development



Thank you for your attention

Questions?

