Milgrom, J., Gemmill, A.W. (Eds.) (2015) Identifying Perinatal Depression and anxiety: Evidence Based Practice in Screening, Psychosocial Assessment and Management. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 292 pages. ISBN: 978-1-118-50965-4 £29.99

This book brings together the latest research and clinical practice in relation to the identification and management of perinatal depression. Contributors are from a range of disciplines including perinatal psychiatrists, clinical nurse specialists, research professors and psychologists. The overriding question that is the main focus of the book is ‘to screen or not to screen’. This book provides the reader with a scholarly examination of how to answer this question – and how to implement the answer.

The book contains ideas from across the globe and contributors have considered what would be needed for screening programs to achieve clinical efficacy, which areas of the field require future work, and speculation about future developments and applications. The current knowledge and issues regarding evidence based screening, assessment and management within perinatal depression are considered, the various chapters provide information regarding minimising harm and attempting to improve outcomes and benefits. Authors consider what would be required to make screening for perinatal depression a viable approach in order to improve the recognition of not only depressed women but their partners and infants/children too. Various questions are raised – when screening is policy, how can we make it work? How do we change attitudes and overcome the stigma surrounding perinatal mental health? It also contains information about the various screening tools available and how to identify perinatal anxiety and related disorders, including the use of broader psychosocial assessments.

One chapter is dedicated to postnatal depression (PND), mother-infant interactions and child development. A careful review of the effects of PND on the mother-infant relationship is presented in order to inform the need for intervention and screening. Previous research is reviewed and discussed. Recommendations include the need for longer-term monitoring and ongoing support for families. However the need for further research on the impact of depression in the developing world and on deliverable screening for parenting difficulties and sensitivity are highlighted as a priority.

Screening tools for detecting fathers’ depression and anxiety are being trialled and this is discussed within the book and the need for further research in this crucial area is highlighted.

One chapter that I found particularly interesting was an update on the international approaches to perinatal mental health screening. Australia, the UK, Canada, France and the United States were all included within this and it was fascinating to read about what is happening globally/internationally; albeit limited to high resource settings.

The book concludes with a chapter about moving forward within the field of perinatal mental health – building our evidence base for effectiveness, and better clarity on the objectives of screening, improved screening performances, and the importance of the inclusion of fathers, extended family, infants and children.

This books delivers its aim – to draw upon various experts’ opinions and to extend knowledge. It is a very informative book which did encourage questioning within my own thought processes about the efficacy of screening and how we can move forward with this within the perinatal mental health arena. I would consider myself to be rather experienced within the field of perinatal mental health, both as a clinician and an academic, and I feel that this book has consolidated my knowledge base rather than enhanced it. However, it would be a very useful resource for practitioners, researchers and students who have a particular interest in perinatal mental health and are perhaps relatively new to the area. For those more experienced it would possibly be less of an advantageous purchase but nonetheless offers consolidation of knowledge and provocation of thought.

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