Effects of Deployment on depression Screening Scores in Pregnancy at an Army Military Treatment Facility


3,956 surveys completed by female Active Duty Soldiers or pregnant spouses of Soldiers at an initial obstetric visit at an Army medical facility at 28-32 weeks gestation, and again 6-8 weeks postpartum were reviewed to estimate the relationship between positive depression screening and spouse deployment status. The risk of a positive depression screen more than doubled in those whose spouse was deployed during the 28-32 week gestation period compared to those with a spouse not planning to deploy.

**Key Findings:**

- At the initial obstetric visit, the prevalence of an elevated depression score was 14% for those with a spouse returning from deployment, 13% for those with a spouse currently deployed, 7% for those preparing for deployment, and 4% for no deployment planned.
- At the 28-32 week gestational visit, the prevalence of an elevated depression score was 21% for those with a spouse returning from deployment, 14% for those preparing to deploy, 10% for those with a spouse who was currently deployed, and 10% for those with no deployment planned.
- At the postpartum visit, the prevalence of an elevated depression score was 16% for those with a spouse who was currently deployed, 12% for those preparing to deploy, 8% for those with a spouse returning from deployment, and 8% for no deployment planned.

**Implications for Programs:**

- Programs could offer pregnant women with spouses in the process of deployment classes on stress and depression management, positive coping strategies during deployment, and parenting.
- Programs could collaborate with military medical facilities to reach out to pregnant spouses of Service members in order to review family programs that may be useful to them.
- Programs could offer peer-led support groups for pregnant women.

**Implications for Policies:**

- Policies could recommend depression screening at multiple time points during and after pregnancy for women at military medical facilities.
- Policies could recommend funding for additional support and services for pregnant partners of Service members in the process of deployment.
- Policies could allow Service members flexibility in their schedules during pregnancy and after childbirth to allow couples time to prepare for childbirth and then bond with their babies.

**Avenues for Future Research:**

- Future research could compare pregnant Active Duty Soldiers to civilians.
- Additional studies could use clinical interviews and non-self-report measures to strengthen these findings.
- Future research could examine the effectiveness of support programs for pregnant women.
Methodology:
- All pregnant Active Duty Soldiers and their pregnant family members who presented at Madigan Army Medical Center (2007-2009) who completed depression screenings at their obstetric visits.
- Participants reported on their depression and their spouse’s deployment status.
- Chi-square analyses compared depression scores across the three time periods and across deployment group.

Participants:
- 3,956 surveys were included in the analyses.
- 52% were collected at the initial visit, 14% at the 28-32 week visit, and 34% at the postpartum visit.
- 653 patients completed the survey at 2 visits; 40 patients completed the survey at all three time periods.
- No demographic data was presented.
- All measures were self-reported instead of preferred clinical interview.

Limitations:
- The analyses did not account for some women answering multiple questionnaires.
- The study was retrospective which may introduce recall bias.
- Many potentially important variables were not included.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample
- The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was...

Research Methods
- The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...

Limitations
- The limitations of this study are...

Implications
- The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...

Overall Quality Rating