Regional distribution of postpartum depressive symptoms in Italy

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INTRODUCTION

Motherhood is one of the most critical period in women life; during the postpartum period, up to 85% of women experience some type of mood disturbance. For most women, symptoms are transient and relatively mild (ie, Baby Blues – BB); however, some women experience a more disabling and persistent form of depression. BB may begin during the first week after birth, last a few days and disappears without any medical treatment. Post partum depression (PPD) occurs in 10-15% of women of the general population. PPD is more persistent and may begin during the first week after birth, last up to 3 months, and may continue even after 1 year. BB and PPD are disabling and persistent forms of depression. For most women, symptoms are transient and relatively mild (BB); however, some women experience a more disabling and persistent form of depression. BB may begin during the first week after birth, last a few days and disappears without any medical treatment. PPD occurs in 10-15% of women of the general population. PPD is more persistent and may begin during the first week after birth, last up to 3 months, and may continue even after 1 year.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of our study is to analyze the prevalence of post-partum disorders in Italy according to the regional distribution.

RESULTS

23.49% of the interviewed women had post partum depressive disorders, in particular, 20.65% had a BB and 2.84% a PPD. Logistic regression analysis highlights risk factors: having attended a pre-partum training (OR = 1.30; p<0.001), having attended a pre-partum training (OR = 1.30; p<0.001), smoking before pregnancy (OR=1.28; p=0.001) and having attended a pre-partum training (OR = 1.30; p<0.001) and having attended a pre-partum training (OR = 1.30; p<0.001) and having attended a pre-partum training (OR = 1.30; p<0.001).

Conclusions

The postpartum depressive disorders can be related to a wide range of different risk factors. Our study points out how this syndrome is more important in Northern and Central Italy; these areas are characterized by higher income levels and a more efficient supply of health care than the Southern regions and the Islands. The data suggest the need to carry out more specific studies to better understand the role of health services development, and economic or social deprivation in determining post partum depressive disorders.

METHODOLOGY

We analysed cross-sectional data from the survey “Health and use of healthcare in Italy”. The survey, carried out on a 5-year basis by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) aims at investigating on a variety of aspects concerning the health of the population. The last edition of this survey, carried out between December 2004 and September 2005, gathered data on 50474 families and 128040 individuals. This study focused on 5812 women who have been pregnant during the 5 years before the survey. Socio-demographic characteristics were available for each participant: age; area of residence, self-reported household wealth, level of education and housing tenure. In addition, the survey investigated also on the exposition on unhealthy lifestyles, such as smoking.

The 15th Emerging New Researchers in the Geography of Health and Impairment Conference

10-11 June 2010 Paris – France

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