

Effects of Infant Massage on the Mother/Baby Relationship in Mothers with Post Natal Depression. 2000

Dr Katsuno Onozawa (main Research Worker), Professor Vivette Glover Perinatal Psychobiology, Professor Channi Kumar (Perinatal Psychiatry). IAIM Certified Instructors Cherry Bond, Neonatal Nurse.MT., Alison Hodgkinson - Reflexologist, MT, Lowell Herbert Music Dip Ed.

Method

Massage demonstrated on doll, so that all reactions are shared between the parent/baby. The group is a place of support where no-one is judged.

- ✓ Relaxation to begin. Allows the parent to unwind
- ✓ Permission.. If baby indicates “no” then the massage does not begin
- ✓ Cues - Parents are taught cues and to adjust accordingly
- ✓ Touch- is adjusted to the age of the baby. New babies often enjoy just being stroked through their clothing.

An integrated approach, attending a massage class is a non-threatening and acceptable way of receiving help. Extra advantage- it helps a mother to understand her baby and how best to keep him or her happy.

Recruitment

First time mothers with depression as per Edinburgh Post natal Depression Scale.

Method

Attend 5 weekly directed support groups.. 12 massage group and 13 in the control group completed the study.

Assessment

Primary assessment was by video-recording of interaction between mother and baby. Baseline depression score for both groups was the same.

Results

Primary score was video interaction. Initially all mothers scores were low, indicating poor interaction.

Scores for mothers in the control group stayed the same for the trial period. The scores for the mothers who attended the massage groups improved dramatically. Similar patterns were obtained for the mothers scores and infant’s behaviour, as judged independently. While the depression of control group mothers improved over the period, it was significantly greater in the massage group.

Conclusion

Although studies have shown that both counselling and drug treatment can improve mother’s depression, this is the first time that an improvement in mother- baby interaction has been established.

This study suggests that massage classes of the type used here for women with postnatal depression have a potentially very important, acceptable and safe role in helping with this hitherto intractable problem.

Plans - to follow this up with a year-long study to see how long the benefits last.