

# **A Mixed-Methods Study on Maternal Perspectives on Postpartum Depression Screening: Beliefs, Concerns and Level of Comfort**

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## **Abstract**

### *Introduction*

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality amongst pregnant women; the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale (EPDS) screens for PPD, however it is unknown how accurately responses reflect the true experience of mothers. Our objective was to assess the maternal perspectives on the purpose of the EPDS, level of honesty while answering, and to identify barriers to completing the questionnaire.

### *Methods*

We conducted a cross-sectional survey and qualitative study design composed of a survey administered in both English and Spanish containing 8 questions about demographics and 16 questions including: yes/no, drop down, check all that apply, and open-ended answers for participants across various hospitals and clinics in the Denver metro area. We evaluated data using thematic and descriptive analysis.

### *Results*

The demographics of our participants were 53% white, 61% had a college education and 78% were married. Most of these women agreed they felt comfortable answering honestly to the EPDS questions (>60%). We found 5 important themes: recognizing symptoms of depression, stigma and guilt surrounding mental health, fear of the unknown, inefficient format, and importance of doctor patient relationship.

### *Conclusion*

Women in the postpartum period are at high risk for experiencing untreated postpartum depression due to fear of not knowing what will happen if they screen positive. There are several barriers to answering truthfully and it is imperative the EPDS becomes more transparent to improve the sensitivity of the screening survey.