



Suicides and Suicidal Ideation During the Perinatal Period: Clinical and Demographic Data by Xenophon, Panagiotis, Eirini, Christiana, and Areti (2022)

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Abstract

The Perinatal period, encompassing pregnancy and the postpartum stage, is a critical time that significantly affects women's mental health and overall well-being. Suicides and suicidal ideation pose pressing public health concerns during this period. High-risk factors, including depression and other mental disorders such as schizophrenia, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and adjustment disorder, further emphasize the need for attention. Healthcare providers play a vital role in identifying at-risk women and connecting them with the necessary resources and mental health services.

Keywords: *suicide, suicidal ideation, suicide attempt, pregnancy, perinatal period, postpartum*

Dear Editor,

I am writing to respond to an article that was written by Xenophon Bazoukis, Panagiotis Eskitzis, Eirini Orovou, Christiana Arampatzi, and Areti Spyropoulou. The article "Suicides and Suicidal Ideation During the Perinatal Period: Clinical and Demographic Data" published May 01, 2019, December 01, 2022, is significant in drawing healthcare providers' attention to understand mental health issues, specifically suicides and suicidal ideation, during the perinatal period. Suicide is a leading cause of maternal mortality, contributing to approximately 20% of postpartum deaths. Over the past decade, the rate of suicide during the perinatal period have shown minimal variation with 0.55 suicides per 100,000 maternities reported in 2011-2013, and a slight decrease to 0.46 suicides per 100,000 maternities reported in 2017-2019 [1] Reid et al. (2022).

Suicide is a significant public health issue, especially during pregnancy and the postpartum period. This refers to instances of individuals inflicting harm upon themselves or having thoughts of self-harm during this time. Women are considered more susceptible to mood disorders, suicidal thoughts, and the onset of psychiatric illnesses during pregnancy and postpartum. It is important to note that pregnancy does not necessarily protect against suicide, as there is a growing concern about the increased prevalence of suicidal thoughts among pregnant women. Shockingly, one-third of female patients hospitalized following suicide attempt are pregnant [2] Belete et al. (2021). Suicidal ideation is now recognized as a common complication of pregnancy and is seen as a predictor for future suicide attempts and completed suicide [3] Gelaye et al. (2016). Thus, understanding and addressing these issues is crucial.

Materials and Methods

This review was conducted by studying 18 papers published in journals that underwent peer review by researchers worldwide. The

literature review involved accessing various databases, including PubMed, Embase, Scopus, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, and Springer. The article includes multiple studies that specifically examine suicidal ideation and suicides during pregnancy and the postpartum period. While the review-based research provides valuable insights into the existing understanding of suicidal risk factors in the perinatal period, it does not offer any new findings that either confirm or contradict the existing knowledge.

Results and Discussion

As stated in this article, the major risk factor for suicidal ideation in the perinatal period is depression. Other mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and adjustment disorder, also contribute as risk factors. Evidence shows that suicidal ideation during the perinatal period has increased over time and can be successfully identified through depression screening practices [4] Bright et al. (2022). Social characteristics have unique risk factors that need to be taken into consideration to help prevent suicidal thoughts. As mentioned in this article, suicidal thoughts during the perinatal period can be attributed to various factors such as younger age, being unpartnered or experiencing difficulties in marriage, having a high number of children, belonging to a non-Caucasian race, lacking health insurance, having poor social support, experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, coming from a low-income country, being unemployed, having a low level of education, and smoking. Obstetric complications like severe vaginal laceration, low birth weight infants, admission to the neonatal intensive care unit, perinatal fetal mortality, and prior abortions are also considered risk factors.

Physical, psychological, or sexual intimate partner violence, sexual trauma, and a history of physical or sexual abuse during military service or childhood can contribute to the risk of suicidal thoughts. Most importantly, there is an urgent need for implementing

more evidence-based strategies in health care services to prevent perinatal deaths from suicide. Establishing action plan based on evidence to identify and diagnosis those in need of mental health treatment during pregnancy and possibly extending to the postpartum period [5] Tabb et al. (2023).

Additionally, the article emphasizes the significance of knowing a woman's psychiatric history when she is enrolled in maternity units. Screening during the perinatal period is considered a crucial clinical tool for identifying women who are at a higher risk of perinatal suicidality. Long-term identification and support of women at a specific risk of maternal death due to suicide in the first year after giving birth may help reduce the occurrence of late maternal deaths. Healthcare providers should diligently monitor and promptly identify related clinical manifestations, potential risk factors, and warning signs associated with suicide through regular monitoring and support for at least 12 months following delivery [6] Orsolini et al. (2016).

Conclusions

This article highlights the pressing need for continued research and a deeper understanding of perinatal mental health. The valuable clinical and demographic data presented in the study have the potential to uncover significant patterns and factors associated with perinatal suicides and suicidal ideation. By delving into these findings, researchers can identify crucial risk factors, enhance interventions, and better address the mental health needs of pregnant and postpartum individuals. Ultimately, this research plays a vital role in improving the overall well-being and support systems of this population.

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Authors' contributions

Alruwaili, Manar conceptualized and wrote the editorial letter

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