

Postpartum Mood Disorders Campaign March/April 2007

Executive Summary

In February 2007 the Best Start Resource Centre launched a provincial public awareness campaign on PPMD. The campaign was developed with the assistance of a provincial advisory committee of experts drawing from a literature review, an environmental scan of existing resources and a Canadian survey to assess knowledge and attitudes regarding postpartum mood disorders in the general population.

The campaign set out to increase awareness of PPMD, clarify misconceptions and encourage help-seeking behaviour. The primary population of interest for this campaign was women aged 19 – 35. The secondary audience was health and social service providers providing services to pregnant and postpartum women and their families.

The campaign was designed to reach a wide range of populations and cultural groups across the province of Ontario. It aimed to achieve changes at individual, network, organizational and societal levels through the involvement of local agencies.

Images and text were field-tested to develop the final campaign messages:

- Life with a new baby is not always what you expect.
- 1 in 5 mothers will have a postpartum mood disorder.
- There is help for you and your family.

A help number was provided through Telehealth Ontario. The staff of Clinidata, the agency providing this service, received training and resources.

Mass media strategies included mall and transit advertising, TV, radio and newsprint. Print resources for the general public were offered to health and social service agencies for use with their clients. Resources designed to inform health and social service providers were distributed using direct mail and promotions through newsletter, emails and websites.

The resources developed for distribution to the general public included: a poster, a brochure, a fridge magnet and a bookmark. The resources developed for health and social service providers included a symptom checklist on a tear-off pad and a desk reference. A website was developed with information for both audiences. Mass media resources included different versions and sizes of the poster, print articles, 15, 30 and 60 second radio announcements and a TV interview with Canadian singer/ songwriter Amy Sky.

The results of the campaign were evaluated through tracking of mass media reach, a pre- and post-campaign public awareness survey, a survey of providers who ordered resources, tracking of website downloads and telephone calls to Telehealth. Informal feedback about local initiatives was also recorded where possible.

Pre- and post-campaign survey

The pre- and post-campaign survey was conducted through a Leger Marketing telephone survey and included 1,000 adults in Ontario.

Overall the survey reported no statistically significant change in awareness of PPMD across Ontario. There were some increases that were statistically significant:

- Awareness increase in the Toronto 416 area by 4% and in Southwestern Ontario by 9%.
- Awareness of helplessness, hopelessness, irritability and loneliness as symptoms of PPMD increased as well by 3 – 5%.
- Awareness through newspapers (5%), transit ads (6%) and malls advertisements (3%) increased, although these only reached a small proportion of the public.
- Mental health workers and support groups were seen as sources of assistance and support
- Those with PPMD should ask for help with tasks (increased by 4%), receiving emotional help (increased by 5%) and share their thoughts and feelings (increased by 3%).

Evaluation of campaign resources and local activities

Campaign resources are still being used by many agencies and were judged to be useful and of good quality by 98% of those who ordered them. Local activities and programs have been developed or expanded as a result of the campaign. It is possible, that in areas where the provincial campaign was complimented by local activities, the increase in awareness was higher.

Website and phone call tracking

Website download have continued since the launch of the www.lifewithnewbaby.ca at a steady volume. In March 2007 3,132 pages were downloaded from the website. This number tapered off to about 800 downloads by August of 2007 and has remained steady with some seasonal variations. On the French side downloads of web pages started more slowly, reaching a high of 821 in August of 2007. They too have remained steady at about 600 downloads per months into 2008.

Calls regarding PPMD to Telehealth Ontario doubled in 2007. Numbers relating to each months are not currently available. Telehealth Ontario reported 36 calls related to PPMD in 2006 versus 72 calls in 2007. Calls to other agencies also increased, though this was reported on a more informal basis.

Discussion

While campaign objectives and strategies focused on pregnant and postpartum women, the pre- and post-campaign surveys examined awareness in the general population. It is possible that greater changes in awareness occurred in these specific populations of interest. The campaign objectives were met successfully. In particular the campaign increased the capacity of local agencies. Further work should be done to increase awareness of symptoms and to reach high risk populations.