

P 9. SKIN TO SKIN CONTACT REDUCES POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AND INCREASES MATERNAL SENSITIVITY DURING FEEDING

Ann E. Bigelow¹, Michelle Power¹, Marion Alex¹, Janis MacLellanPeters¹, Judith Cormier¹, Penny Fuller², Terry Penny², Magdy Fouad³, Ann Marie Murdock², Doris Gillis¹, Claudette McDonald⁴, Kim MacLean¹, Clare Fawcett¹, Sherry Bowman¹

St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada 1, St. Martha's Regional Hospital, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada 2, Aberdeen Regional Hospital, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Canada 3, Colchester East Hants Health Authority, Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada 4.

Background: Skin to skin contact (SSC) may affect maternal behavior by enhancing maternal mood states and sensitivity toward infants.

Aim: To investigate the effects of SSC on postpartum depression and sensitivity to infants during feeding. **Material and methods:** SSC group mothers provided 5 hours of daily SSC in infants' first week, then 3 hours per day until infants were one month. Control group mothers provided little or no SSC. When infants were one week, one month, two months, and three months, mothers ($N = 108$) completed postpartum depression scales (Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale; Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale) and a feeding session was scored on the NCAST (Nursing Child Assessment Satellite Training) feeding scale that assessed maternal sensitivity, nurturing, and fostering of social-cognitive growth.

Results: Control group mothers reported significantly higher depression on both depression scales when infants were one week and marginally higher depression when infants were one month. When the infants were one week, SSC group mothers had higher NCAST scores.

Conclusions : During the infants' first weeks of life, mothers who engaged in SSC experienced less postpartum depression and demonstrated more maternal sensitivity during feeding.

Key words: skin to skin contact, postpartum depression, maternal sensitivity