Maternal Prenatal Depression and Anxiety Affect Neonatal Neurobehavior

Prenatal depression and anxiety have been linked to impaired infant neurobehavior including altered attention, responsivity, and quality of movement. No known studies have assessed individual and joint effects of prenatal depressive and anxiety on neonatal neurobehavioral outcomes. The current study compared these outcomes among (1) mothers diagnosed with comorbid Depressive and Anxiety Disorders, (2) mothers diagnosed with only Depressive Disorders, (3) mothers diagnosed with only Anxiety Disorders, and (4) mothers with no prenatal diagnosis.

Maternal prenatal diagnoses were assessed by the SCID-I. Offspring neurobehavior was assessed from 1-2 to 30 days using the NNNS. There was a between-subject's effect (*n*=248) of maternal diagnostic group on infants' self-regulation, quality of movement, and hypertonicity from birth to 30 days. Mothers with no diagnosis had infants with better self-regulation than those with depression or anxiety, better quality of movement than those with depression, and were less likely to have hypertonic infants than those with individual or comorbid depression. Maternal diagnoses may differentially affect offspring neurobehavioral profiles.