

The Consequences for a Child of a Parent's Depression – Literature Review

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Background information

“Concerning Children of Parents with Depression” is a study that aims to answer two questions:

- In Denmark, which support is given to 2-14-year-old children of depression?
- How does the actual support match the children’s needs?

The initial literature examination has exposed an amount of previous studies.

The focal points of this 5-minute presentation

- A number of observational studies of babies between 3 and 6 months and their depressed/nondepressed mothers
- A meta-analysis of 46 observational studies of babies and toddlers
- A prospective 4-year study of teenagers between 14 and 18 years
- A longitudinal 20-year study of – now grown-up – offspring of parents with depression

Studies of 3-month to 6-month old babies

The first weeks and months in a child's life are very important, and if the mother has a depression, the baby is at risk of

- becoming more inactive
- becoming less expressive
- being more sad
- experiencing longer periods of frustration than babies of nondepressed mothers.

Steady contact with other caring adults will improve the child's situation.

Field et al., 1988; Field et al., 1990; Field, 1990; Kaplan et al., 2002; Field, 2010; Diego et al. 2010

Meta-analysis of 46 observational studies

“A Review of studies from the last decade of postpartum depression effects on early interactions, parenting and safety practices and on early interventions.”

46 different studies have been analysed and rated systematically in different perspectives.

Lovejoy et al., 2010

Prospective 4-Year study of 2427 teenagers

A representative group of 2427 14-year old teenagers with depressed parents were examined by diagnostic interview (The Munich Study).

- The teenagers with depressed parents had an increased risk of experiencing psychiatric illness, especially depression, and they had an earlier onset of depression and more serious periods of illness than teenagers with nondepressed parents.
- The incidence of depression was doubled in the group of teenagers with depressed parents.

Lieb et al., 2002

20-Year Follow-up Study of Offspring of Depressed Parents

151 respondents have been followed for 20 years – blindly assessed.

Their parents were treated in a psychiatric clinic when they - at the age of 17 years - were included in the study.

- The risk of anxiety disorders, depression and substance abuse were three times higher than average of the age-group.
- The incidence of cardio-vascular illness was five times higher than average of the age-group.

Pilowsky et al., 2006; Weissman et al., 2006