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**Maternal perinatal depression in the neonatal intensive care unit: the role of the neonatal nurse.**

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**Abstract:**

The onset of depressive symptoms during pregnancy or the first year postpartum, termed perinatal depression, occurs in approximately 15 percent of women. Perinatal depression can have a significant negative impact on health outcomes for the mother and her infant including maternal emotional distress and parenting difficulties and infant behavioral and developmental problems. Nurses caring for patients in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) are in a key position to affect positive change in the lives of families affected by perinatal depression. An overview of antepartum and postpartum depression is provided that has been tailored to the educational needs of the neonatal nurse. A discussion of the role of neonatal nurses in the identification and treatment of perinatal depression follows in order that neonatal nurses may improve both short- and long-term outcomes for mothers, infants, and families in the NICU affected by perinatal depression.

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