

Royal College of General Practitioners and Warwick Medical School
Annual Education, Research and Innovation Symposium
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| PRESENTER'S DETAILS | | |
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| Category Research | | |
| PRESENTATION DETAILS | | |
| Authors Eleanor Molloy Deborah Biggerstaff | | Title of Study "I feel like I lost all of those early days" :exploring mothers' experiences and perceptions following development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms related to Birth Trauma |
| What's the problem you are tackling? This study explores the lived experiences of women who suffer Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, or display sub-threshold symptoms thereof, following Birth Trauma. We examined women's views and feelings about seeking support postnatally and how easy this support was to access. The study also investigates the mothers' perception of impact of Birth Trauma on their early parenting experiences, and their developing relationship with their infant. | | |
| How did/will you do it? An online questionnaire was used to gather thoughts and experiences of women who classified themselves as having a traumatic birth experience. Women who answered the survey (response rate N = 72) were invited to participate in face-to-face interviews about their experiences of seeking support after birth, and early parenting. Interviews were transcribed, (N = 6 to date) and analysed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach (IPA). IPA is a phenomenological idiographic analysis, which treats each woman's experience as unique and individual, whilst allowing for extraction of overarching themes common to each story. | | |

What did you find?

Women's experiences of and reactions to birth, birth trauma, and the impact on themselves and their families are individual. Analyses of women's interpretations of their experiences showed some common and overarching themes, including

- fearing being seen as an unfit parent;
- not understanding their experiences: without fitting into 'classic' post-natal depression symptomology '*nearly not ill enough*' these women didn't know what kind of help they needed.

Why does this matter?

The impact on an infant's emotional and social development, of a mother who is emotionally unavailable, or incapable of responding appropriately to her child has been well documented. Recent years have seen an increase in the understanding of development of PTSD symptoms in women who have suffered Birth Trauma. Postnatally, the impact of Birth Trauma can be overlooked by those supporting women – which can have lead to long-term effects on both the new baby, and the mother's ongoing mental well-being.