

## INTRODUCTION

Decreased social support was associated with an increased risk of postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety, and impaired parent-infant bonding.<sup>1</sup>

However, there is little research on the relationship between social support and PPD in racial/ethnic minority women.<sup>2</sup>

While Black women and White women had similar depressive symptoms, there were differences in how the symptoms were managed.<sup>3</sup>

This study seeks to determine how Black women in Eastern North Carolina are supported throughout the postpartum period and how these supports affect quality of life.

## OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to find out what supports Black women in Eastern North Carolina receive during the postpartum period.

The aims of the study will be:

1. How are Black women in Eastern North Carolina being supported during the postpartum period?
2. How do perinatal mood disorders present in Black women in Eastern North Carolina?
3. How do perinatal mood disorders affect the quality of life of Black women in Eastern North Carolina?
4. Is there a difference among Black women in postpartum support or diagnosis and treatment of perinatal mood disorders?

## RESULTS

Results are pending. We expect to find that Black women seek support during the postpartum period through community resources, rather than through physicians or pharmacological treatments or therapy. We also expect to find that the quality of life of Black mothers in Eastern North Carolina who experience postpartum depression do not have a worse quality of life, despite similarities in reported depressive symptoms.

## DISCUSSION

This study seeks to contextualize the regional rural experiences of Black women in Eastern North Carolina during the postpartum period. Exploring how Black mothers engage in social supports may provide insight for providers into treatment and management of postpartum depression and other perinatal mood disorders for Black women, which is of particular importance due to the current Black maternal mortality rates.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

- Participants will be asked to complete an online survey via Qualtrics with questions including: demographics, financial stability, pre-pregnancy health, health status during pregnancy, pregnancy experience, birthing experience, postpartum experience, diagnoses of a mood disorder during the postpartum experience, and the supports they use during the postpartum period in comparison to prior to and during pregnancy. Surveys include the Multidimensional Scale of perceived social support, Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)
- Participants will have the option to complete a recorded virtual interview about their postpartum experience to elaborate on their birth and postpartum experience.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Ages 18-55.
2. Women assigned female at birth who identify as Black or African-American.
3. Have given birth vaginally, via VBAC or C-Section in the last 2 years.
4. Must speak English.
5. Live in the state of North Carolina.
6. Ability to give consent and comply with the study protocol.

## REFERENCES

1. White, L.K., Kornfield, S.L., Himes, M.M. et al. The impact of postpartum social support on postpartum mental health outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Arch Womens Ment Health* **26**, 531–541 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-023-01330-3>
2. Pao, C., Guintivano, J., Santos, H. et al. Postpartum depression and social support in a racially and ethnically diverse population of women. *Arch Womens Ment Health* **22**, 105–114 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-018-0882-6>
3. R. Jean Cadigan & Debra Skinner (2015) Symptoms of depression and their management among low-income African-American and White mothers in the rural South, *Ethnicity & Health*, 20:3, 293-308, DOI: [10.1080/13557858.2014.921889](https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2014.921889)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Dr. S. Karlene Cunningham, the SHaRE2 Lab and the Dept. of Psychiatry for your support and mentorship. Thank you to the Brody School of Medicine and the SSRP program for funding this summer research opportunity.

Figure 1: A sample of the online survey questions.

