**Perinatal and Infant Mental Health in Women’s Prisons: Between Aspiration and Reality**

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Maternal incarceration is a well-established risk factor for the development of child mental health problems, hence it is imperative to provide comprehensive perinatal mental health care to perinatal women in prisons. NSW has the highest female prison population in Australia, where most pregnant incarcerated women are either young, Aboriginal, or have a history of trauma, mental health and/or substance abuse.

Despite the availability of dedicated maternity, drug and alcohol, and perinatal mental health services for pregnant women in prisons, there are system constraints in providing trauma-focused, therapeutic and parenting supports that these women require. Furthermore, despite the vacancies in the prison’s mother-baby unit, most incarcerated women are separated from their infants post-birth, which limits opportunities for supporting the mother-infant relationship.

This paper will discuss the introduction of a perinatal mental health services in the NSW female prisons and highlight the system constraints, the personnel demands and the under-utilised opportunities for improving the outcomes of incarcerated women and their infants.