**Perinatal Assessment of Risk of Mental Illness: Experiences of First-time Mothers and Clinicians**

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**Background**

This presentation aligns with the conference theme of early detection and treatment, prevention and community support. Comprehensive risk assessment for mental illness is recommended as part of routine perinatal care for all women. However, in Australia, women who gave birth in a private hospital were less likely to receive this assessment. The study aims to provide new information on perinatal risk assessment of mental illness for first-time mothers who gave birth in private hospitals.

**Methods**

A qualitative descriptive methodology was employed to collect rich, diverse data on perinatal risk assessment of mental disorder. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were undertaken at two metropolitan private hospitals. Data was explored and interpreted on the experiences of first-time mothers who had received hospital maternity care and clinicians who provided hospital maternity care. Content analysis enabled exploration and interpretation of their experiences of perinatal risk assessment of mental illness.

### **Results**

Interview data were gathered from eight mothers, eleven midwives, three nurses, six obstetricians and three paediatricians. The four themes on perinatal risk assessment for mental disorder were 1) although participants felt that this was important it was not provided as a part of routine perinatal care, 2) screening may be undertaken but not a comprehensive psychosocial assessment 3) screening was not provide as part of coordinated care 4) lack of mental health resources were not preventing assessment as part of routine care.

### **Conclusion**

Although participants believed that it was important and although resources were available, these first-time mothers did not undertake comprehensive assessment for risk of mental disorder as part of routine, coordinated perinatal care.