



# PERINATAL SUPPORT WASHINGTON

## Maternal Depression Often Begins in Pregnancy

The international perinatal psychiatry consortium Postpartum Depression: Action Towards Causes and Treatment (PACT) has released results from a study investigating the connection between timing of onset and severity of symptoms in women with maternal depression. The organization represents 19 institutions across seven countries.

More than 8,200 mothers were categorized into one of three sub-groups: severe, moderate, and mild depression. PACT found that two-thirds of the women identified as severely depressed--with symptoms such as suicidal ideation and panic -- began experiencing depressive symptoms *during* pregnancy. Researchers plan to continue exploring how biological factors in these women differ from those in women who develop classic postpartum depression.

Symptoms for moderately depressed women often arose postpartum, aligning with the more typical way of thinking about maternal depression. The study also found that moderately depressed women were more likely than severely depressed women to have experienced complications during pregnancy, while severely depressed women were more likely to have experienced complications during delivery.

The PACT study, published in *The Lancet Psychiatry* in January of this year, is the largest to date on postpartum depression.

To view an abstract of the study, see:

<http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366%2814%2900055-8/abstract>

For additional details, see: <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/02/maternal-depression-often-starts-before-giving-birth-study-says/? r=0>