

ABSTRACT

Background

Even though peripartum depression (PPD) is an important health concern among Sri Lankan women, pattern and predictors of help seeking for PPD is not well known.

Objective

To describe help seeking intention related to symptoms of peripartum depression and to determine associated factors among pregnant women visiting antenatal field clinics in Anuradhapura district.

Methods

A descriptive cross sectional study among pregnant women Anuradhapura district was carried out. Assuming prevalence of help seeking intention for PPD as 50%, design effect as 1.5 and non-response rate as 5%, minimum required sample size was calculated as 606. Multi stage cluster sampling with probability proportionate to size was used. A vignette of peripartum depression with two parts (A without suicidal thoughts and B with suicidal thoughts) was designed and the questionnaire was developed based on the vignette. Expert validation, cognitive validation and pretesting of the vignette and tool were conducted. Chi square tests (for binary/ordinal data), t test (for age), Man-Whitney test (for income) and logistic regression (backward conditional) were used to identify factors associated with help seeking intention.

Results

Of the 624 participants recruited, 383 (64.1%) had help seeking intention (with or without a period of waiting) for symptoms of PPD. Only 36.7% (n=206) had the intention to seek help immediately for suicidal thoughts. Preferred first choice for help seeking among 284 (56.3%) participants was their husband. Inability to identify abnormality of symptoms from normal was observed in 55.9 % (n=330), and inability to identify suicidal thoughts as a danger sign was observed in 36.3% (205) of participants. In the logistic regression (χ^2 - 59.292, p=.005, n=389) effect of stigma on help seeking intention for PPD was evident as those who disagreed to feeling angry about the affected person's behavior (OR 1.8, p=.024), disagreed that the affected person must be lazy (OR 1.8, p=.017) and agreed that the person is a danger to her baby (OR 1.9, p=.009) were more likely to seek help. Higher education qualifications (OR 2.2,

p=.008), Perceiving husband is likely to direct her for treatments (OR 2.348, p=.001), feeling angry about affected person's husband (OR 2.2, p=.002) and feeling that the affected person is not receiving adequate family support(OR 1.9, p=.013) were also shown to be associated with help seeking intention for PPD.

Conclusions and recommendations

Help seeking intention for symptoms of peripartum depression and suicidal thoughts were suboptimal in this population. Stigma should be reduced and knowledge about PPD should be increased.

Key Words

Help Seeking Intention

Peripartum Depression

Anuradhapura

Postpartum