Maternal Parenting Stress and Reported Depression and Anxiety Following Child Diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes

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Abstract

The current study examined the responses of mothers to their child’s diagnosis with type 1 diabetes and specifically focused on symptoms of depression and anxiety. Analyses also examined correlates of symptom reports, such as parent age, child hospitalization at diagnosis, and pediatric parenting stress. Results found that a large portion of mothers reported clinically significant symptoms of anxiety and depression, which were associated with younger maternal age, child hospitalization, and pediatric parenting stress.

Introduction

Factors hypothesized to be related to mothers’ experiences of depression and anxiety upon child’s diagnosis are:

- Maternal age
- Whether a child is hospitalized at diagnosis
- Pediatric parenting stress (i.e., stress related to caring for a child with a chronic illness)

Methods

- Fifty-seven mothers (M age = 40, 76% Caucasian, 85% married) completed questionnaires within four weeks of their child’s diagnosis with type 1 diabetes (child M age = 9.35 years, 86% hospitalized at time of diagnosis).
- Measures
  - Demographic information
  - Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)
  - State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)
  - Pediatric Inventory for Parents (PIP)

Results

Rates of depression and anxiety
- 76% of mothers met cutoff scores (CES-D > 22) for depression
- 69% of mothers met cutoff scores (STAI > 40) for anxiety

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
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<td>1.33</td>
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<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.86</td>
<td>.402</td>
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<td>Child’s age</td>
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- Predictors of depression
  - Greater reported difficulty of pediatric parenting stress (p < .01)

- Predictors of anxiety
  - Younger maternal age (p < .01)
  - Child not hospitalized at diagnosis (p < .05)
  - Greater reported difficulty of pediatric parenting stress (p ≤ .001)

Discussion

- Experience of depression and anxiety may be common for mothers immediately following their child’s diagnosis with type 1 diabetes.
- Younger mothers were at greater risk for experiencing anxiety following their child’s diagnosis, which may be related to parenting experience. As the incidence of diabetes among younger children is increasing, more young parents will also be affected and may therefore be at increased risk for anxiety at diagnosis.
- Mothers whose children were not hospitalized at diagnosis were more likely to have clinically significant levels of anxiety than those whose children were hospitalized. This may be because being in the hospital provides parents with more initial support and education upon diagnosis. This is of particular concern as more centers move towards outpatient care at the time of diagnosis.
- Upon diagnosis, clinicians and educators should be more aware of these potential difficulties and provide referrals to behavioral health specialists, or include evaluation by, or consultation with, a behavioral health specialist as a routine part of care following diagnosis.
- Pediatric parenting stress, as well as symptoms of depression and anxiety, could be targeted in prevention and intervention programs.