

JOINT EVENT

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The relationship between perinatal mental health problems and infant stress: first year of life**Itzia Perez Morales**

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Objective: Investigate cortisol reactivity in infants born to: 1) mothers at high-risk of developing puerperal psychosis (PP), and mothers with no such risk, and 2) mothers at high-risk of developing PP that remained well and mothers at high-risk that became unwell.

Methods: Saliva cortisol from 71 infants (42 cases and 29 controls) born to mothers at high and low risk of developing PP was collected immediately before and 20 minutes after routine immunizations at 8-weeks and 12-months. The case group was further subdivided according to maternal mental health status, infants born to mothers that presented clinically significant symptoms between birth and 4-weeks postpartum were allocated into the unwell group, while infants born to mothers that remained well were allocated into the well group. Infant cortisol reactivity was measured as the difference between cortisol levels before and after routine immunizations, and differences between groups were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney tests and confounders were controlled for in linear regression models.

Results: Differences in cortisol reactivity were compared between groups, finding no significant at 8-weeks, and significant differences were found in the 12-month, although these were non-significant after controlling for possible confounders.

Conclusions: Infant cortisol reactivity may not be affected by maternal risk of developing PP or maternal health status in the first year of life. However, these results could change in a bigger sample at 12-months, as sample size could not account for all potential confounders.

Biography

Itzia Perez Morales obtained her bachelor's degree in Clinical Psychology with distinction in 2016 from Universidad de las Americas in Mexico City. Since then, she has worked as a clinician in psychiatric hospitals, youth addiction rehabilitation units, paediatric hospitals and IAPT services, along with research work in experimental biology, child psychotherapy, pharmacogenetics, and perinatal psychiatry. Currently, she is a recent graduate from the Psychiatric Research MSc program at King's College London with the dissertation "The relationship between perinatal mental health problems and infant stress: the first year of life".

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