

## ABSTRACT

In the United States, postpartum depression (PPD) is one of the most debilitating psychological disorders for women in their childbearing years <sup>(1)</sup>. Research indicates that maternal-infant therapeutic interventions such as skin-to-skin contact (SSC) and kangaroo mother care (KMC) improve maternal-infant bonding, decrease maternal stress and depression, and improve infant temperament <sup>(2)</sup>. Babywearing is an adaption of these therapies and involves securing a child to the caregiver with a sling, wrap, or carrier <sup>(3)</sup>. Therefore, babywearing may help decrease the occurrence and severity of PPD while increasing the maternal-infant bond <sup>(4)</sup>. The purpose of this project is to establish a community outreach program to increase the knowledge and use of babywearing amongst postpartum mothers in Cache Valley, Utah.

## PICO QUESTION

For postpartum women (P), does infant babywearing (I) promote maternal bonding and decrease the rate of postpartum depression (O) during the first three months (T) following birth, compared to mothers who do not babywear (C)?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- PPD can occur anytime during the first 12 months following birth and can significantly impact maternal and infant health and well-being <sup>(1)</sup>.
- Risk factors include fluctuations in hormones, stress, social support, breastfeeding success, and temperamentally difficult newborn <sup>(1, 5)</sup>.
- A strong sense of maternal bonding seems to counteract the negative effects of PPD <sup>(6)</sup>.
- Similarities between babywearing and KMC/SSC include placing the newborn in the upright ventral position against the caregiver's chest <sup>(3)</sup>. The correlation between these modalities was made to establish the therapeutic benefits of babywearing.
- Babywearing can have a positive impact on PPD by improving:
  - Maternal sense of bonding <sup>(6)</sup>.
  - Breastfeeding success <sup>(7)</sup>.
  - Infant temperament <sup>(3)</sup>.
  - Improved social interaction.
  - Increased level of maternal oxytocin <sup>(8)</sup>.

# Promoting the Utilization of Babywearing for Postpartum Depression in Primary Care Practice Settings: An Educational Program for Providers and the Community

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## PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project is to enhance the knowledge and proficiency of safe babywearing practices while promoting babywearing in the community of Logan, Utah. Community exposure to babywearing and access to babywearing tutorials will assist in accomplishing this goal. During routine well-child visits with pediatricians at Primary Care Pediatrics (PCP) in Logan, Utah, information about the benefits of babywearing and an invitation to a monthly hands-on babywearing class will be offered to all parents of newborn and infant patients. The monthly babywearing class will be held in conjunction with the Babywearing of Cache Valley (BWCV) monthly meetings at The Family Place in Logan, Utah. During this class, participants will be taught about the benefits of babywearing and how to babywear safely. They will also have the opportunity to try or borrow various babywearing products. All participants will receive educational materials to take home and a follow-up phone call to assess progress.

### Teaching Methods

- Parental educational pamphlet
- Educational slideshow
- Course outline
- Course Handout

### Evaluation Tools

- Parental competence pre- and post-test
- Follow-up phone call

### Implementation Tools

- Nurse and medical assistant orientation
- Promotional slideshow



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### Nursing Implications

- Low-cost, high-yield community outreach program.
- Nurse-led intervention.
- Health promotion for an entire population.

### Strengths

- Simple and inexpensive.
- Beneficial to postpartum mothers and newborns.
- Validation of respected providers.
- Additional support network for PPD.
- Expert babywearing instruction.
- Collaboration with well-established and trusted babywearing organization.
- Safe babywearing guidelines available from Baby Carrier Industry Alliance (BCIA) for no additional cost to the project.

### Limitations

- Recent dissolution of Babywearing International (BWI).
- Dues from BWI membership provided income for the chapter.
- Non-profit BWI affiliation and assignment of lending library.
- Funding for project moving forward.



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Lippitt's change theory will guide the development and implementation of babywearing education in the Primary Care Setting. Specific project application includes:

- Clear project objectives in the promotional slideshow presentation and staff orientation encourage motivation for clinic participation.
- Affiliation with BWCV and adherence to BCIA principles ensure safe and up to date babywearing instruction.
- Continuous collaboration between BWCV and PCP throughout the duration of the project implementation.
- Project improvement using pre- and post-tests from clients and direct communication with PCP staff.

## CONCLUSIONS

Babywearing is a simple, low-risk intervention that may reduce instance and severity of PPD by enhancing maternal-infant bond, improving breastfeeding success, reducing infant colic, and increasing oxytocin release <sup>(4)</sup>. This project will:

- Increased awareness of the benefits of babywearing amongst staff at PCP.
- Provide the basic benefits of babywearing to new moms and an invitation to a monthly hands-on babywearing class.
- Ensure that safe babywearing education is provided to members of the community at no charge.
- Provide structured follow-up and keep the post-partum depression conversation going.

## REFERENCES

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