Background

• 1 in 5 mothers is diagnosed with postpartum depression or anxiety (PPDA) → risk factor for impaired child development ¹
• Fathers are often also distressed → couple conflict
• Couple conflict is a major predictor of PPDA² and increases the child’s risk for future behavioral issues
• We propose that Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBI) offered to fathers may improve couple’s relationship and subsequently the mother’s mental health
• All factors may ultimately lead to better developmental outcomes for the child

Objectives

• To investigate the feasibility and acceptability of MBI for new fathers
• To explore preliminary evidence supporting partner participation in MBI, based on the pilot data

Methods

• Participants: Eligible fathers were in a relationship with a woman diagnosed with PPDA; fathers were not patients themselves; recruitment at a perinatal mental health clinic
• 8-week adapted MBSR program
• Measures: Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ), satisfaction (CSQ), mindfulness (FFMQ-15), depression (PHQ-9), anxiety (GAD-7)

Results

Feasibility and satisfaction:
• 33% dropout rate, mostly due to scheduling conflicts - need to accommodate fathers’ schedules
• All fathers were satisfied with the program, 80% rated it as excellent
• All fathers would recommend the program to a friend

Preliminary evidence suggests:
• Increase in expression of feelings to each other
• Decrease in nagging and demands by self and by partner
• Decrease in blaming and criticizing by self and by partner
• Increase in feeling of mutual understanding after a discussion

Future directions

Further studies should explore the effects of including fathers in MBI on the mother’s mental health and the outcomes in the child.

Our team is working on next stages of this research project – contact us in case you are interested in potential collaboration or would like to learn more.

References


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