HAVEN - MHEALTH CARE FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT OF POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION.

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Abstract

Postpartum Depression is a disorder which occurs within four to six weeks after giving birth. Both mother and father can experience Postpartum Depression, but it mostly affects the mother. There is a stigma surrounding mental disorders therefore, mothers not seeking help as they are afraid of being labelled as a 'bad mother'. Furthermore, postpartum women lack the knowledge on identifying their symptoms as postpartum depression and lack knowledge on self-management. Therefore, these disorders often go underdiagnosed, untreated or unmanaged. Postpartum Depression is a treatable disorder but, if it is left untreated, there could be adverse effect on the mother, the growth of the child and on the family.

The aim of this project is to address the above problem and design, develop and evaluate an IT solution that will help women identify if they are at risk of developing postpartum depression and encourage them to seek medical attention, while also guiding on self-management techniques they could follow to manage the condition. In creating an intervention, various factors such as risk of developing postpartum depression, barriers for seeking help and factors affecting for postpartum depression to be underdiagnosed, self-assessment and management techniques were analysed using available literature. Further validations and insight into the problem were gained through conducting interviews with medical professionals and surveys distributed among postpartum women.

In Sri Lanka, there is a lack of mental health applications for postpartum depression due to stigma associated with mental disorders. Hence, after comprehensive analysis of the requirements gathered, HAVEN was designed and developed to aid postpartum mothers to identify if they are at risk of developing postpartum depression through self-assessment and self-management strategies to manage the condition. It was evaluated on the necessity and impact and was well received by the experts and non-experts.

Keywords: Postpartum Depression, Self-assessment, Self-management, help seeking behaviour, depression management activities