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Postnatal depression, oxytocin and maternal sensitivity

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Stellingen/ Propositions

Postnatal depression, oxytocin and maternal sensitivity

Beth Mah

1. The administration of intranasal oxytocin induces a sadder mood in mothers with a diagnosis of postnatal depression, at least in the short term. (This thesis)
2. In the oxytocin condition, mothers with postnatal depression describe their infants as more difficult but report their relationship quality with their baby as greater. (This thesis)
3. The protective response of a mother with postpartum depression towards her infant, when intruded upon by a socially intrusive stranger, is increased by oxytocin administration. (This thesis)
4. Mothers with depression in the postnatal period are more likely to rate an infant cry as urgent in the oxytocin condition. (This thesis)
5. A mother with postnatal depression is more likely to choose a harsh caregiving strategy in response to an infant cry after being administered intranasal oxytocin. (This thesis)
6. Postnatal depression increases the risk of neglectful parenting. (Kotch et al. 1999)
7. Oxytocin appears to increase the salience of an emotional state. (Alvares et al. 2010, Bartz et al. 2011, Riem et al. 2012)

8. Oxytocin should not yet be administered to mothers with a diagnosis of postnatal depression and infants under the age of one.

9. Interventions to increase the quality of interaction between a mother with postnatal depression and her infant should remain psycho-social, including (and in particular) psychological therapies.

10. “By thus seeing those fantasies grounded in the reality of the child, parents may become less vulnerable to failed expectation, less trapped by unwarranted fears, and more emotionally available in interactions with the child”. (T. Berry Brazelton 1995)

11. Cultural interventions should be utilized. For Aboriginal Australian parents and infants, still potentially affected by the ‘Stolen Generation’, culturally acceptable social and political interventions should be prioritized. (Feather et al. 2012)

12. Another sphere that both social and political interventions should be prioritized is for the plight of refugee children, held in detention centers, such as is practice in Australia. (Dudley et al 2012)

13. Literature can be a useful medium to deliver a message of the value of sensitive parenting such as this quote from a popular children’s book: “What if I were a polar bear and I was the meanest bear you ever saw and I had sharp shiny teeth and I chased you into a cave? Then I would know that inside the bear you would be you and I would love you. I will love you forever and always...” (Barbara M. Joosse 1998)