

THE BODY IN PERINATAL HEALTH

Women's experiences of Dance Movement Psychotherapy (DMP) for postnatal depression.

Edge Hill
University

Research Centre for
**Arts and
Wellbeing**

Emma Perris PhD student

Supervisors:
Professor Vicky Karkou
Dr Lena Simic
Dr Mark Edward



Introduction

Postnatal depression is estimated to affect 15-20% of mothers in the UK. Dance Movement Psychotherapy (DMP) is a creative psychotherapeutic intervention that supports an embodied approach to psychotherapy. This study aims to explore women's experiences of DMP as an intervention for postnatal depression.

The aim of this study is to give a voice to the experiences of women receiving DMP treatment for postnatal depression and seeks to understand how the intervention may be developed further for this patient group.

In order to better understand the subjective experiences of the participants, qualitative methods including arts-based and evaluative methods are used to both collect data and to disseminate the findings.

Objective

To identify the perceptions and experiences of mothers with symptoms of postnatal depression who are participating in a twelve-session group Dance Movement Psychotherapy intervention.

Methodology

Qualitative methods with elements from hermeneutic phenomenology, arts-based methods and heuristics.

Delivered 12 weekly sessions of DMP and conducted qualitative interviews with creative/embodied response before, during, and after intervention.

Researcher was also therapist delivering the intervention - collected embodied movement reflections from therapist after each weekly session.

Analysis (in progress) includes aspects of IPA and the hermeneutic circle alongside arts-based methods of analysing creative/embodied material.

Initial Findings

Findings from 1st and 2nd interview

- Depression (PHQ-9) and anxiety (GAD-7) scores lower at 2nd interview.
- Mothers reported at 2nd interview:
 - Enjoying meeting others in similar situations
 - Increased confidence
 - Taking group tasks home to do together with baby
 - Feeling more relaxed



The Intervention

Twelve sessions of group DMP following the Arts for the Blues model (Omylinska-Thurston et al, 2020) which uses eight key ingredients:

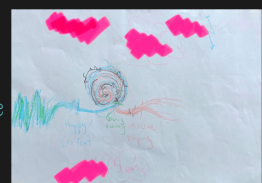
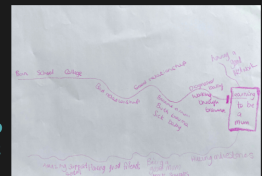
Key Ingredients	DMP group with mothers
(1) Encouraging active engagement & (2) Learning skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Warm up & guided massage for mum and baby• Group activities• Singing with baby• Body scan• How to move with baby (attachment behaviours)
(3) Developing relationships & (4) Expressing emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mirroring baby and each other in pairs• Mindful communication - what would you say to baby?• Sharing movement - expressing things that may be hard to verbalise
(5) Processing at a deeper level & (6) Gaining understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Art task - mapping life story• Reflecting using storytelling and movement• Which bits were trickier or easier? How did you overcome these? How did it feel in your body?
(7) Experimenting with different ways of being & (8) Integrating useful material	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making group artwork and basic group dance• Thinking about where you are now and where you would like to be in the future.

"I feel more confident around other people"

"Baby likes to do the dance steps at home"

"It's been great to meet others"

"I feel much more relaxed about things"



Conclusion

Mothers who attended 12 weeks of group DMP reported enjoyment of the programme, improved depressive and anxiety symptoms, and use of accessible movement-based interventions to do at home with baby.

The Arts for the Blues model can be adapted for mothers and babies with a focus on reducing social isolation and encouraging healthy attachment behaviours.

There is scope for more quantitative research to test effectiveness of DMP for perinatal mental health including depression.

Key References

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