

NZ identifies unmet need for antenatal mental health support

July 20, 2021 | News

The research examined anti-depressant use and symptoms of depression in more than 6,000 pregnant women



The first-ever study to look at anti-depressant use and symptoms of depression in pregnant New Zealand (NZ) women has identified unmet need for antenatal mental health support.

The research examined anti-depressant use and symptoms of depression in more than 6,000 pregnant women in this country's largest longitudinal study, Growing Up in New Zealand.

The study, funded by the Better Start National Science Challenge, found that around 3.2% of pregnant women in the study took anti-depressants, but a further 12% experienced symptoms of depression without receiving medication.

Better Start researcher, University of Auckland Quantitative Social Science lecturer, Dr Stephanie D'Souza, says the findings are important because antenatal depression can lead to poorer health outcomes for both mother and baby.

The results suggest that there is significant untreated serious depression among pregnant women in Aotearoa-New Zealand which suggests that many women may not be receiving adequate mental health support during pregnancy.