

Psychotherapeutic treatment of men with post natal depression

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Fathers' Relations With their Infants A Danish Research Program

- Main Study:
Fathers' Attachment With their Infants
 - Fathers' ability to reflect their infants' states of mind
 - Fathers' models of caregiving
- Sub-studies in the research program:
 - Fathers and delivery
 - Fathers and pre-natal courses
 - Men's mood disorders in relation to fatherhood
 - Fathers and small children in the hospital
 - Grandfathers' relations with their sons as fathers
 - Fathers and assisted reproduction
 - Men as fathers in psychotherapy

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Design and Participants:

- **Registration of the fathers' presence at 700 deliveries**
- **Questionnaires from 250 fathers** about expectations to and experiences with attending delivery
- **Interviews with 10 midwives**
- **Questionnaires from 200 fathers** about being the biological father
- **Interviews with 72 fathers** before and after the birth of the child - about expectations to and experiences with the infant and fatherhood
- **Interviews with 10 mothers**
- **Questionnaires from 607 fathers** about mood disorders
- **Psychotherapy with 120 fathers** (still accumulating)

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Fathers and delivery - some results

- 95 % of Danish fathers attend delivery at the hospital (N: 700)
- 98 % attend the birth of their child because they want to (N: 200)
- 70 % wish to stay overnight with the child and the mother at the hospital, which is seldom possible (N: 200)
- 80% participate in prenatal preparation courses and prophylactic consultations (N: 200)

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Meeting the new father in our clinic

120 men in psychotherapy

Time of referral	%
During pregnancy	28
Around delivery & confinement (< 1 month)	26
Infancy > 1 month	46

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Different levels of paternal depression

- At the individual level: Depression and anxiety
- At the relational level: Feeling trapped by, fear of, fantasies about hurting, and misinterpretations of the baby
- At the level of memories of care giving: Memories of being deserted and misunderstood
- At the level of relations with parents: Longing for love and care and lack of a model of parenthood
- Outbreak: Being alone /

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The psychology of Paternal depression: A double pain

- Feelings and memories of being forsaken and abandoned in own childhood becoming painfully present



- The grieve of not being able to develop healthy relationships with the infant

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How many men?

- The disorder affects approximately 10-14% women postpartum (EPDS)
- As part of the Fatherhood Research Program at Copenhagen University Hospital in Denmark 607 men included in a survey (Grant from the EU)
- Method:
 - Edinburgh Post Natal Depression Scale (EPDS) and
 - Gotland Male Depression Scale (GMDS) administered the fathers 6 weeks after the birth of their child

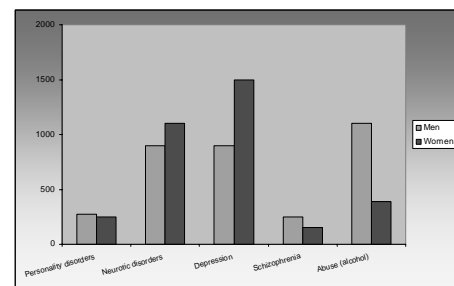
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Why include two scales?

- The significant gender differences in mental health statistics
 - Especially the incidence of depression among women and men
- The Gotland experience:
 - Male depression
- The American experience of masculinity:
 - The Masked Depression

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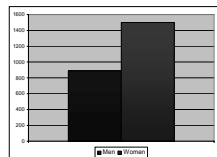
Gender differences in mental problems



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Men with mood disorders

- Men are diagnosed with a depression only half as often as women



The Danish Ministry for Gender Equality (2004)

- Don't health professionals see men as depressive – but rather as irritating or frightening?

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Men's depressive symptoms

- Anger attacks, acting out, aggressiveness, low impulse control, low stress tolerance
- Tendency to blame others and to be unforgiving
- Higher willingness to take risks - High suicide risk
- Behavior on the verge of social or legal standards
- Substance abuse (especially alcohol)
- Withdrawal from relationships, rigid demands for autonomy
- Over involvement with work activities
- Avoiding the help of others ("I can do it myself")
- Denial of pain and sadness and an inability to cry

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EPDS ('Traditional' depression)

- Unable to laugh or be humorous
- Unable to look forward to things
- Blaming myself unnecessarily when things go wrong
- Feeling anxious or worried for no good reason
- Feeling scared or panicky for no good reason
- Things get on top of me
- Have been so unhappy that I have had difficulty sleeping
- Feeling sad or miserable
- Feeling so unhappy that I have been crying
- The thought of harming myself has occurred to me

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GMDS ('Male' depression)

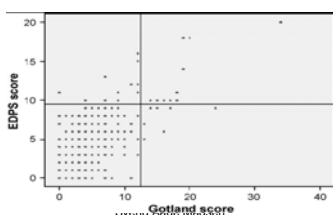
- Lower stress threshold/tolerance/feeling more stressed
- Feeling aggressive, outward-reacting, low impulse control
- Feeling burned out and empty
- Inexplicable fatigue
- Feeling irritable, restless and frustrated
- Difficulty making everyday decisions
- Sleeping too much/too little/sleeping fitfully
- Difficulty falling asleep/early waking
- Feeling agitated/anxious/uncomfortable
- Excessive use of pills and/or alcohol
- Excessive activity: working, jogging etc. hard
- Altered behaviour makes, difficult to be around
- Perceiving oneself/others perceive one as gloomy, negative
- Feeling / others perceiving one as moaning, self-pitying

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Results

EPDS	5,0 %
Gotland	3,4 %
Depression including EPDS + Gotland	6,5 %

Cases included in both scales are only counted as one.
General depression: 3.5% of 20 to 50-year-old men



Implications

- Current annual births in Denmark is 65.000: Roughly 4-4,500 men suffer from post-partum depression annually.
- Nearly none are identified
- There are only one or two places for treatment
- Fathers' mood disorders affect their children's emotional and social development

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Approaching the new father in research or in treatment

The man's symptoms of depression

- His images of fatherhood and masculinity
- His relationship with the infant
- Experiences with care-giving in own childhood and present time relations with own mother and father

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Working in a reflective dialog with the man on the mental states behind his:

- Anger - the man's extroverted, negative states of mind often find expression in aggression, sometimes against himself
- Withdrawal - often withdrawal from close relations is seen as a way to relieve pain
- Past and present relations with caregivers - the man often feels uncared for
- Relations with his infant - often the aggressions are directed towards the child
- Relations with spouse - sometimes the aggressions are directed towards the wife
- Ambivalence between longing for closeness and attachment on the one hand and autonomy and detachment on the other
- Images of masculinity related with the infant's need for care.

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Treatment modalities

- A two-pronged psychotherapy working with
 - the man's past and present relations with caregivers
 - alternating with his relations with the infant

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What is needed

- Recognition of the existence of men's mood disorders related to parenthood
- Better methods for identifying men with postnatal depression including male sensitive assessments
- Training health-care staff in male sensitive communication and awareness of the psychological transformation of men becoming fathers
- Psychotherapeutic methods suited for men

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Litterature:

Madsen, S.Aa. & Juhl, T. (2007). Paternal depression in the postnatal period assessed with traditional and male depression scales. *Int Journ Men's Health & Gender. Vol 4 Issue 1, March, 26-31.*

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