

# **NAVIGATING HELP: A CASE OF A DEAF WOMAN WITH POST-PARTUM DEPRESSION REQUESTING PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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## **Background:**

Deaf people face structural barriers, cultural barriers, and communication difficulties in healthcare. There is limited provider knowledge and validated research involving deaf people, despite an increased incidence of mental illness such as bipolar disorders (3.7% versus 14.2%). Masks, social distancing, increased rates of mental illness, etc. during the COVID-19 era creates additional concerns. A case of post-partum depression in a Deaf female will be presented to highlight current barriers.

## **Objectives:**

Describe 3 challenges in healthcare for Deaf people

## **Methods:**

Search engines Pubmed, Scopus, and Web of Science were queried using the search strategy of {(Deaf + mental health), (deaf + mental health + culture), (deaf + depression)} which led to 37 articles, but {(Deaf + postpartum depression), (deaf + perinatal + depression), (deaf + perinatal + mood)} only had 1.

## **Case/ Results:**

A 33-year-old G6P6 Deaf female with a history of postpartum depression vaginally delivered a boy. She was anxious, guarded with reported difficulties in maternal bonding (postpartum depression scale score 12). She deferred interpreter services and relied on lipreading. No providers spoke American Sign Language or were familiar with Deaf culture, including on discharge, which limited interactions.

She requested a crisis home placement as it was previously beneficial and this was her first premature child. She was evaluated by behavioral health. Partial hospitalization and crisis home services were closed. Mental health services had a 3-month waitlist. Her social supports felt they could keep her and her child safe. She was discharged home with a primary care appointment at 30 days without interpreter services.

## **Discussion:**

A lack of culturally competent care, mental health services, validated treatment, and trust in healthcare leads to worse clinical outcomes for the Deaf community. An increase in barriers for the Deaf community highlights the urgency of mental-health providers to address the gaps in care.

## Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize challenges in healthcare for Deaf people
2. Identify how barriers for the Deaf community have increased in the setting of COVID-19