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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND DEPRESSION IN
POSTPARTUM WOMEN

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by
Regina Beccia Wrenn

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Karin D. Fissell RN PhD
Thesis Advisor

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Abstract

This descriptive study was undertaken to determine if postpartum women with a higher level of social support will exhibit less depression than women with low levels of social support. The sample consisted of 30 primiparous mothers recruited from two pediatricians' private practices. All subjects were part of a convenience sample and participation in the study was voluntary. All subjects were married, without serious medical complications of pregnancy or childbirth, delivered vaginally full term healthy infants, without a history of diagnosis of depression, and aged from 22 to 35 years.

Two instruments were used to collect data for the study: Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Revised Kaplan Scale for Social Support. The BDI is a 21-item self evaluation instrument based on attitudes and symptoms of depressed clients. The BDI scores range from zero (no depression) to 63 (severe depression). Revised Kaplan Scale uses a nine-item story identification technique to describe level of social support. Scores for the Kaplan's Scale range from nine (low level of support) to 45 (high level of support). Both instruments were administered to each subject at a routine pediatrician visit.

The BDI scores in this study ranged for 1 to 29 with a mean score of 8.3. Nine (30%) of the subjects scored in the range of depression. The scores of the Revised Kaplan Scale in this study ranged from 20 to 45 with a mean score of 35.43. The study hypothesis, postpartum women with a higher level of social support will exhibit less depression than postpartum women with low levels of social support, was tested by performing the Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the scores of Beck Depression and Revised Kaplan Scale for Social Support. The results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation demonstrated a negative linear correlation between social support and depression in postpartum women. The r statistic was $-.8665$. The critical r value for this test was $-.361$ at the $p < .05$ level of significance. The results indicate that postpartum women in this study with a higher level of social support did exhibit less depression than postpartum women in this study with low levels of social support and the hypothesis was accepted.