

Project Title

# **Perinatal mental health care in Switzerland: Unraveling the perspectives of affected women and health professionals**

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## **SUMMARY**

**Background:** Perinatal mental disorders (PMD) occur during pregnancy or in the first year postpartum. PMD are highly prevalent (up to 20%) and can severely harm the health of affected women and their children. Women are at risk of persistent mental disorder, children can be impaired in their mental, cognitive and behavioural development if their mothers affected by PMD are not treated appropriately. Though mental health care is covered by basic health insurance in Switzerland and is widely used in the perinatal period according to health insurance data, we do not know the extent or quality of these services. To understand if perinatal health care meets the needs of women with PMD, we must analyse the service provision, access and efficiency of care.

**Aims:** We seek to obtain fundamental knowledge about the requirements for adequate mental health care in the perinatal period in Switzerland. We will identify key factors that promote or hinder service provision and access to care, for a range of relevant PMD, from both user and provider perspectives.

**Methods:** The qualitative study consists of two complementary parts to assess user (part 1) and provider perspectives (part 2). In part 1 we will conduct individual semi-structured interviews with 24 women who have had PMD. We will ask the women to share their experiences with health care, and their perspective on factors that hindered or promoted treatment for their condition. We will stratify the sample by 4 clusters of various relevant ICD-10 F-diagnoses, covering a wide range of mental disorders. We will also stratify the sample into women who received or did not receive previous mental health care before the last experience of PMD. In part 2 we will conduct 3 focus groups (with 5-8 participants per group) with professionals from health disciplines, social care, and a health insurance company with experience and knowledge about perinatal mental health care. We will be guided for data collection and analysis by Levesque's et al (2013) conceptual model on access to health care.

**Expected value of the research:** The study will assess for the first time the user and provider perspectives on perinatal mental health care in Switzerland. While related studies in other countries used self-assessment instruments and concentrated on post-partum depression, we will use ICD-10 diagnoses of mental disorder and will cover a wide range of relevant PMD including the most frequent and severe forms of PMD. The study will generate the evidence base needed to develop integrated, coordinated, patient- and family-centred care for women with various types of PMD. Based on our study innovative models of inter-professional and interdisciplinary care can be developed which include advance practice roles for nurses and midwives. Finally, the study will prepare the ground for a quantitative population-based study on perinatal mental health care in Switzerland.

**Keywords:** perinatal mental disorder, access to mental health care, barriers to care, facilitators of perinatal mental health care, health care professionals, user perspective, provider perspective