

# Anxiety, Depression, and Other Mental Disorders in Pregnant Women Living in Exposure to COVID-19

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## Abstract

**Background:** The current COVID-19 pandemic puts itself as a threat to maternal mental health, since conditions of severe stress, often inflates the occurrence of mental diseases among the pregnant population. Some studies have already reported the rising of distress and psychiatric disorders among pregnant women during the COVID-19.

**Method:** Studies were identified using large-circulation international journals found in two electronic databases: Scopus and Embase.

**Results:** Depression and anxiety in the gestational period may change perinatal decisions. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that pregnant women around the world are not suffering equally. As in every situation, the most fragile always tend to suffer more; it was already a concern before the pandemic, due to the higher rates of mental disorders during the gravidity in developing countries compared to the developed ones.

**Conclusion:** The lack of social support providing the main needs of the pregnant population may increase the incidence of anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders.

**Keywords:** Pregnant population; COVID-19; Mental disorders

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## Introduction

It is always indispensable to worry about pregnant women's mental health since pregnancy is already complete of intense emotions and mental instability and vulnerability [1]. The current COVID-19 pandemic puts itself as a threat to maternal mental health, which must be included among the concerns about the indirect impacts of the novel coronavirus outbreak, since conditions of severe stress, such as this unprecedented pandemic, often inflates the occurrence of mental diseases among the pregnant population worldwide [2]. In this regard, some studies have already reported the rising of distress and psychiatric disorders among pregnant women during the COVID-19 outbreak compared to others times before, with significant increases in anxiety and depression symptoms [3-5].

## Methodology

Although pregnant women are not yet considered as a group with a higher risk of developing the COVID-19, the remaining uncertainties related to the disease are a source of fear, anxiety, and sadness [6]. In addition, physical distancing and quarantine measures, with remote consultations of prenatal care, put a serious concern about the inability to obtain the expected level of health assistance [2], besides the already many worries of pregnant women regarding the health of the unborn child. Moreover, there are apprehensions in reason of the economic instability, since there are many losses of income due to the measures to contain the spread of the disease, revealing the fear of being unable to provide all the necessities of their children [2,7].

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that pregnant women around the world are not suffering equally. As in every situation, the most fragile always tend to suffer more, it was already a

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concern before the pandemic, due to the higher rates of mental disorders during the gravidity in developing countries compared to the developed ones [8]. Those with poor socioeconomic status, gaps in proper health assistance, no physical activities, and bad health behaviors have increased risk not only for mental illness but for pregnancy morbidities too [3,4]. Thus, the lack of social support providing the main needs of the pregnant population may increase the incidence of anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders [7]. In addition, pregnant women living in countries or cities with higher rates of COVID-19 also face higher exposure and the stricter restrictions, which tend to be more likely to develop a mental illness during this pandemic [5].

The mental suffering always puts major risks on anyone's life. Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, the mental illnesses may rise the suicide rates and harmful methods of dealing with the quarantine, such as alcohol consumption [2], that is particularly terrifying to the pregnant population, who need to maintain a healthy routine for the safety not only of them but for their unborn children too. Overall, depression and anxiety in the gestational period, the main concern of this letter, may change perinatal decisions [5] and have already been associated with adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes [4-8].

## Discussion and Conclusion

It is imperative to include the maternal mental health care on the interventional strategies of governments, NGO's and institutions to mitigate the damages of the COVID-19 pandemic in purpose to avoid a disaster in the pregnant population worldwide. According to many authors, it is important to develop internet-based tools to screen anxiety and depression symptoms routinely, also creating psychological headlines, online counseling, and even telephone-based therapeutical support in order to prevent mental suffering, without leaving to assist the pregnant population in their basic needs, such as effective health assistance, financial support and mental health accompaniment. It is also necessary to disseminate information about ways to relieve maternal distress. Pregnant women cannot keep waiting anymore.

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## Key Highlights

- Pregnant women's mental health is already complete of intense emotions and mental instability and vulnerability.
- The current COVID-19 pandemic puts itself as a threat to maternal mental health.
- Some studies have already reported the rising of distress and psychiatric disorders among pregnant women during the COVID-19 outbreak compared to others times before, with significant increases in anxiety and depression symptoms.

## Authors' Contributions

MLRN, KRDA and ISC designed the review, developed the inclusion criteria, screened titles and abstracts, appraised the quality of included papers, drafted the manuscript and reviewed the study protocol.

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## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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