

Perinatal Mental Health: Optimizing Maternal Treatment to Improve Infant Outcomes

We held this conference in Chicago, the “Windy City!” This is the first national American Conference on Perinatal Mental Health! The meeting was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and was co-sponsored by Northwestern Medicine and several organizations whose mission is to improve the health of mothers and infants: American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, North American Society for Psychosocial Obstetrics and Gynecology, MotherToBaby (formerly the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists), and the Seleni Foundation. About 370 delegates from 20 countries attended the conference! In this issue of the newsletter are some reports from the three conference workshops.

The theme, Optimizing Maternal Treatment to Improve Infant Outcomes, was selected to focus on the critical importance of the managing maternal mental illness during pregnancy to improve the health and well-being of their infants. The goal of treatment is remission of the disorder and return to optimal functioning. Nowhere in medicine is the need for personalization of care so crucial than during pregnancy—personalization of the intervention for the primary mental illness and comorbidities; for the course, characteristics, and treatment responses of the woman’s illness; for pregnancy physiology; and for her capacity to provide sustenance for the growing fetus and interactive emotional care after the baby is born.