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Substance addicted mothers need multidisciplinary treatment modalities

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Over half of substance misusing mothers is also suffering from some other psychiatric disease. This important factor should be addressed in treatment settings. In Finland, most pregnant women get into maternity clinic check, but in this patient group it sometimes happens that mothers come to give birth without any former visits to maternity services. Even if this group of patients has some heterogeneity, their social background is usually difficult in many respects. Single-parenting, violence, lack of support from own parents and financial problems are common.

Psychiatric diseases encountered in this group are mostly the same as in other patient groups, prevalence of psychosis is higher, though. Psychiatric and substance use treatment modalities should be combined with social services, supported housing, child protection etc. Most urgent target for treatment is to provide drug free pregnancy. Under sufficient help most mothers are capable of fostering their own children at least for the first years. Evaluations for pregnant women should include psychiatric assessment and low-threshold services should be provided.

In this study sample of 49 pregnant substance abusing mothers attending Addiction Psychiatric Clinic in Tampere, Finland, it came clear that supporting these mothers needs fluent co-work between social- and health services, reaching out approach and net-working. Offering care to substance using mothers requires professional, patient-centered attitude to avoid the patient escaping from services in fear of losing the child. Child protection services can be provided in supportive manner.

Biography

Paula Strengell has been working with addicted mothers for 15 years at Tampere University Addiction Psychiatric Clinic ever since she got her specialty in psychiatry at Tampere University School of Medicine. In addition, she is teaching psychiatry and addiction medicine at the university. She is in PhD program and has been publishing about this subject as well as working as a referee.

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