



Postpartum Support International Conference Heads to Kansas City; Top Experts on Perinatal Mental Health to Share Research

Focus on Fathers: One in Seven Men Experience Perinatal Mental Health Disorders; Support and Treatment are Accessible and Effective; New Findings Will Pave Way for Better Care, More Awareness

June 20, 2023—KANSAS CITY, Mo.— In its ongoing effort to provide support to parents, raise awareness about perinatal mental health disorders (PMHDs), and educate health professionals, nonprofit [Postpartum Support International](#) (PSI) is hosting its 36th annual conference June 28 to July 2 in Kansas City, Mo. Research shows postpartum depression and other PMHDs, including anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, and psychosis, affects 800,000 people a year, yet only 25% of them receive treatment and many parents are unaware that what they are experiencing is normal and treatable.

“We are thrilled to bring our annual conference to beautiful Kansas City and to showcase the amazing team of PSI staff and volunteers who are based here,” said Wendy Davis PhD, PMH-C, executive director of Postpartum Support International. “I experienced a perinatal mental health disorder in 1994 after my son was born, and it is really inspiring to see how far we’ve come since then—to witness the effort, intelligence, and enthusiasm that are part of this conference and are critical to the perinatal mental health field.”

During the conference, hundreds of volunteers, mental health professionals, healthcare providers, researchers, and advocates will gather to be trained and learn from colleagues, hear from experts in the field about latest research and treatment developments, and strengthen the network of parents and professionals that is changing the dialogue about perinatal mental health.

Conference sessions will feature topics including “Coloring the Conversation,” with the PSI Perinatal Mental Health Alliance for People of Color; “Addressing Racial Disparity in Maternal and Infant Health”; “Therapeutic Tools for Owning Your Story”; and “Doing It All for My Baby: A Multidisciplinary Exploration of Contemporary Fatherhood.”

In addition to the conference kicking off this month, June is also when Americans celebrate fathers and fatherhood, which is anything but happy for those suffering from a PMHD.

“As a society, we much more commonly think about moms when it comes to perinatal mental health concerns, but we know that as many as one in seven men experience depression or anxiety during the perinatal period, which includes pregnancy, post-loss, and 12 months postpartum,” said Postpartum Support International Advisory Board Member Psychologist Daniel Singley, Ph.D. “Societal norms dictate that men should be supportive and strong, which makes them even less likely to seek support or treatment for PMHDs. It’s imperative that we break the stigma that is often associated with perinatal mental health disorders for both mothers and fathers.

Singley also says another barrier to understanding and treatment of PMHDs in fathers is that men often exhibit different symptoms of depression. It can manifest itself as anger, irritation, frustration, and being short with people, or withdrawing from relationships. Dads may start drinking more alcohol or using other substances.

“We are finding that many mental health professionals are not connecting these types of behaviors with the fact that the father may be depressed or have anxiety. We are working to change that with our resources,” Singley said. “Nobody should have to suffer, and these conditions are common and treatable.”

Recent tragedies involving Lindsay Clancy in the Boston area and Paulesha Green-Pulliam in San Francisco have brought PMHDs to the forefront of national news. While symptoms vary, these disorders commonly make parents feel alone and helpless. They may be paralyzed by anxiety and doubtful of their ability to parent, which can lead to feelings of regret and despondency at a time society dictates should be one of the happiest of their lives.

PSI will also host its Climb Out of the Darkness awareness event and unity walk on Saturday July 1st from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Washington Square Park. The event is free and open to the public and will include yoga and barre classes and an agenda full of family activities. Proceeds from donations and sponsorship will benefit Kansas City’s [Whole Parent Foundation](#), which promotes the mental health and well-being of all mothers, birthing persons, partners, and support systems in the Kansas City area.

If you or someone you know is interested in registering for the PSI annual conference, visit [here](#).

Parents and their loved ones should know support and care are available, and you don’t need a diagnosis to get help. PSI offers coordination, comfort, and peer support, helping people find the right resources online and in their own communities, including Kansas City. Parents can call or text the PSI Helpline for support and resources at 1-800-944-4773 (English and Spanish); text “help” to 1-800-944-4773 (English) or 971-203-7773 (Spanish); or visit [postpartum.net](#).

PSI has an online Perinatal Mental Health Provider Directory that lists specialized groups and providers with their location and insurance coverage and operates a Perinatal Psychiatric Consultation line through which any medical provider can consult with an expert perinatal psychiatrist at no charge. PSI facilitates more than 30 virtual support groups including those for military families, fathers, LGBTQIA+ families, Spanish speakers, and more.

About Postpartum Support International

Founded by a new mother in 1987 to increase awareness among public and professional communities about the emotional difficulties women can experience during and after pregnancy, Postpartum Support International (PSI) offers a wealth of resources for a wide range of needs and situations to give families the strongest and healthiest start possible through support and community. PSI offers support, resources, best-practice training and certification for healthcare professionals and peer supporters nationwide and in more than 30 countries. PSI is committed to eliminating stigma and ensuring compassionate and quality care and support are available to all families. Call or text 1-800-944-4PPD (4773) or learn more at [postpartum.net](#).

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