



***Postpartum Support International and UMass Chan Medical School
Secure Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute Award to
Conduct Perinatal Mental Health Equity Study***

**Study Seeks to Improve Lives of People with Perinatal Mental Health Disorders;
One in Five Pregnant and Postpartum People Affected**

Jan. 23, 2023—PORTLAND, Ore.— Postpartum Support International is excited to announce its participation on a researcher-community partnership team recently awarded a grant from the [Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute](#) (PCORI) to conduct a perinatal mental health equity study starting in 2024. The study will focus on mood and anxiety disorders that affect as many as one in five pregnant and postpartum individuals, comparing how well a practice-level intervention and a peer-support program improve symptoms of depression and anxiety among patients receiving care at 32 OB clinics.

The Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity research study will be co-led by PSI's Executive Director Wendy Davis, PhD, [UMass Chan Medical School](#) perinatal mental health expert Nancy Byatt, DO, MS'15, MBA, professor of psychiatry, obstetrics & gynecology and population & quantitative health sciences, and Christopher Sheldrick, PhD, professor of psychiatry at UMass Chan. The study will compare a healthcare model of improving mood and anxiety disorder care in OB-GYN practices with a healthcare-community partnership model. The study will include 32 OB-GYN practices; half will follow the healthcare model and the other half will follow the healthcare-community partnership model. The healthcare-community partnership model will include PSI's peer support model, which pairs individuals in need of support with a trained volunteer who has experienced and recovered from a perinatal mental health disorder.

"PSI is grateful to PCORI for its support of this unique opportunity to increase perinatal providers' ability to integrate trauma-informed care with peer support, which will ultimately increase people's access to treatment that best meets their needs," Davis said. "Equally important is the work this study will do to gather scientific evidence on the most effective interventions for addressing inequities, such as access to quality and culturally responsive care."

The study will aim to make the approaches scalable by training perinatal psychiatry access program teams to implement the models and continue training others after the life of the study. To ensure an explicit focus on equity, both models of care in the study will include training in anti-racism and trauma-informed care, screening, and referrals for social determinants of health.

“Mental health and substance use disorders are the leading cause of maternal mortality in the United States. Most perinatal individuals do not have access to the mental health care they need,” Dr. Byatt said. “We aim to help address that in this study by integrating mental health care into obstetric care.”

The study will involve an initial feasibility phase to maximize the likelihood of full trial success. It is one of four new, ambitious patient-centered comparative clinical effectiveness research (CER) studies focused on both the healthcare and social factors that contribute to inequities in maternal morbidity and mortality, recently funded by PCORI through an innovative PCORI funding opportunity known as [Partner](#). Partner funds CER studies in which community organizations are full partners in the work, are in leadership roles, and are partners in critical decision making alongside research organizations. These four CER studies will focus on populations disproportionately experiencing adverse maternal health outcomes, including Black people, Hispanic and Latin American individuals, those living in rural areas, and individuals with lower incomes.

“These funding awards mark an important advancement of PCORI’s long standing leadership in engaging patients and those who care for them in all aspects of comparative clinical effectiveness research to ensure that results are relevant, useful and impactful,” said PCORI Deputy Executive Director for Patient-Centered Research Programs, Harv Feldman, M.D., MSCE. “We look forward to seeing the impact the studies’ findings will have for maternal health across the United States, particularly among populations that continue to disproportionately experience adverse outcomes.”

About Postpartum Support International

Founded by a new mother in 1987 to increase awareness among public and professional communities about emotional difficulties 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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