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Attachments and Transitions: Impact of an Attachment Intervention with At-Risk Parents and Infants

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Attachments and Transitions:
Impact of an Attachment Intervention with At-Risk Parents and Infants
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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

• Improving the relationship between infant(s) and their parent(s) is of great importance
• Infants of parents with substance abuse problems have a higher rate of entry to the foster care system than infants of non-abusing parents
• Infant massage interventions have been shown to improve bonds between non-abusing parent(s) and their infant(s), increase parenting skills and knowledge of child development, and decrease parental stress and depressive moods
• Substance dependent parents have trouble forming healthy attachment with their babies
• The current study evaluates the impact of a 10-week infant massage intervention program with substance dependent parent(s) and their infant(s)

METHOD

Parent Participants (N = 13)
• 85% female
• 54% single
• Mean age = 33.8 years; SD = 4.391
• 69% completed least high school
• 100% were unemployed

Infant Participants (N = 13)
• 62% female
• 39% Caucasian and 31% African American
• Mean age = 2.8 months; SD = 2.471
• 69% born with positive toxicology screen

RESULTS

Parent PSI Mean Score

Parent BDI Range

T-test comparison of mean scores for correct and incorrect answers showed no significant differences
(Correct - Pre-test: mean = 39.92; SD = 5.88; Post-test: mean = 41.15 SD = 8.52
Incorrect - Pre-test: mean = 11.38; SD = 3.55; Post-test: mean = 11.31; SD = 8.49)

DISCUSSION

• Though not statistically significant, results demonstrate decreased parent depression and increased knowledge of child development following participation in an infant massage program
• Results suggest lower parental stress following the intervention with a statistically significant decrease in dysfunctional interactions between parent and child
• Participants indicated that the intervention was very helpful in creating a stronger bond with their infants
• The current study is limited by small sample size, lack of comparison group, and pre-test post-test sensitization
• Future research should include more participants, a comparison group, and measures to directly assess infant participants

Representative Responses

Post-test

• “The bond between us is stronger, the emotional bond”
• “Baby is more close to me now. I understand my baby more and she understands me”
• “We are closer”
• “I feel like I am more in-tune with her and her needs”
• “We are closer. I know her wants and needs better. Also, baby knows mom better. Good eye-to-eye contact”
• “We are closer I understand him, he understands me”
• “Take care of her better. She is less frustrated”
• “Sing to her more and we talked to each other more”
• “I massage her more”
• “Give them massage all the time now, every night after bath, bottle and fall right to sleep”

Post-test

• “I feel bad for her”
• “I feel compassion because I want her to hurry up and do something about it”
• “Confused because sometimes I do not know why he is crying”
• “Sad sometimes, but sometimes she wants my attention and I always be there”