Screening for antenatal depression and predictors of under-screening in Australia: The Born in Queensland Study

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**Abstract**

**Background**: Antenatal depression is often under-recognized by health professionals in regular antenatal health checks. Universal screening have been recommended in Australia to increase detection of women suffering depression during pregnancy.

**Objective(s):** To explore antenatal screening using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) in QLD prenatal care services and risk factors of not receiving screening, four years after clinical guidelines recommended universal screening.

**Design:** Cross-sectional retrospective analysis of health services administrative data from July 2015 to December 2015.

**Setting:** State-wide population-based data collection in Queensland.

**Participants:** All pregnant women who gave birth in Queensland in the second half of 2015 (n=30,468).

**Main outcome measures:** EPDS screening completed during pregnancy (“yes”, “no” or “not stated”).

**Results:** Of the 30,468 women of our sample, 21,735 (71.3%) women completed the EPDS during their pregnancy. 91% (18,942) of the pregnant women enrolled as public patients completed the EPDS compared to only 28.8% (2,762) of women enrolled as private patients (p=<0.001). After adjustments significant predictors of under-screening included women aged 36 or older (OR, 0.69; 95 CI, 0.60–0.79; p=<0.001), enrolled as private patients (OR, 0.05; 95% CI, 0.05–0.06; p<0.001), born overseas (OR, 0.75; 95% CI, 0.68–0.82; p<0.001), identified as Indigenous (OR, 0.47; 95% CI, 0.39–0.56; p<0.001), and identified as single or separated (OR, 0.83; 95% CI, 0.73–0.94; p= 0.002).

**Conclusion(s):** There is a notable disparity between screening rates of private and public patients four years after clinical guidelines recommended universal screening with the EPDS. This study may inform future research to compare and analyse the impact on screening uptake following recent changes to the program by the Australian government.

A link to the publication can be found here <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2019/210/1/screening-perinatal-depression-and-predictors-underscreening-findings-born>