PRE- AND POSTNATAL EXPOSURE TO MATERNAL SUBSTANCE USE AND ATTACHMENT STYLES IN CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO PRESCHOOL: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND META-ANALYSIS

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Background: Maternal substance use is often associated with insecure attachment of children. Yet, research is inconsistent, and we lack systematic evidence about the association, as well as about the mediating and moderating mechanisms related to parent and child characteristics.

Objectives: To examine the research evidence about the role of maternal substance use on attachment styles in children aged 0–5 years, and further to elaborate the mediating and moderating mechanisms.

Data Sources: A systematic review of English language articles using MEDLINE, PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, and The Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) was conducted. The search strategy included terms related to pre- and postnatal period, young children, attachment, mother, substance use and substance exposure with no restrictions to dates selected. Additional studies were identified by scanning reference lists of included studies and by consulting experts on the field.

Study Selection: We included studies with children from birth to 5 years and mothers with pre- and/or postnatal substance use if child’s attachment style was examined. We also included foster and adoptive mothers if child’s substance exposure was known.

Data Extraction Methods: Two reviewers evaluated study inclusion and coded included studies independently using a predefined data extraction sheet. Study quality was assessed with the Quality Assessment Tool for Observational Cohort and Cross-Sectional Studies provided by the National Institute of Health (NIH).

Data Synthesis: Meta-analysis was performed to answer the research questions and main results will be presented at the congress.

Conclusions: This study provides a synthesis of previous research concerning the association of maternal substance use and attachment styles of young children. Our results emphasize parent- and child-related characteristics that shape and affect attachment development among children exposed to maternal substance use.