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Validated Mental Health Screening Instruments for the Post Pregnancy Period: A Systematic Survey of Systematic Reviews Protocol

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - No financial support was used for this review.

Review Stage at time of this submission - Data extraction.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

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Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 5 April 2026 and was last updated on 5 April 2026.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective To list mental health screening tools for the post-pregnancy period identified in appropriate systematic reviews.

Rationale Globally, about 13% of post-pregnant individuals experience mental health disorders. These conditions extend beyond depression to include anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and suicidality, collectively representing the most common complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Despite the recognized prevalence of post-pregnant mental health disorders, screening and detection remain inconsistent. Multiple systematic reviews have evaluated the accuracy and efficiency of different perinatal mental health screening tools. Our rationale was to list all the screening tools identified in these systematic reviews.

Condition being studied Post-pregnant mental health disorders.

METHODS

Search strategy Search terms included the following keywords and MeSH terms: ("Perinatal" OR "Pregnancy" OR "Maternal Health") AND ("Mental Health" OR "Mental Disorder") AND ("Screening" OR "Validation" OR "Surveys and Questionnaires" OR "Checklist") AND ("Systematic Review" OR "Meta-Analysis").

Participant or population Participants with lived experiences of pregnancy.

Intervention Screening tools used for the diagnosis of any mental health disorders in the perinatal period.

Comparator Any mental health screening tools or no comparator.

Study designs to be included Systematic reviews and meta-analyses will be included.

Eligibility criteria - As this is an update to a previously published umbrella review (Smith et al., 2022), we will be including reviews published after May 2021.

- Studies must focus on the use of structured mental health screening tools in the perinatal period.
- Publications must be available in full text.
- Only reviews published in the English language will be included.
- Articles not addressing screening tool use (e.g., treatment-only studies) will be excluded.
- Other reviews including narrative reviews, and scoping reviews, and primary studies will be excluded.

Information sources The main databases to be searched are Embase - Embase via Ovid, MEDLINE and PsycInfo. Other important or specialist databases that will be searched include Global Health and EBM Reviews.

Main outcome(s) Performance characteristics may include sensitivity, specificity, positive predictive value, negative predictive value, and receiver operating curve (ROC).

Additional outcome(s) Social determinants of health, health equity considerations, language and literacy accessibility, and mode of administration, if available.

Data management All references and duplicate records will be managed and screened using Covidence.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis Not available.

Strategy of data synthesis Data extraction from published articles and reports: data will be extracted independently by at least two people (EA, LS) using a pre-piloted excel sheet. Extracted data will include study characteristics, disorder type(s), screening tools identified, performance characteristic, mode of administration, feasibility and contextual factors.

Subgroup analysis Not available.

Sensitivity analysis Not available.

Language restriction Our systematic survey will be limited to reviews published in the English language.

Country(ies) involved The review will be conducted in Canada at the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, McMaster University, Canada.

Keywords Postpartum Mental Health; Mental Health Screening Tools; Health Equity.

Dissemination plans The findings of the systematic survey will be disseminated through publication in an open-access academic journal with a global readership.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Eisha Arvikar - Author 1 contributed to data curation, formal analysis, investigation, visualization, and writing (original draft).

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