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'Women's views and experiences of having their mental health needs considered in the perinatal period.'

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## TITLE PAGE – MIDWIFERY ARTICLE SUBMISSION

TITLE: 'Women's views and experiences of having their mental health needs considered in the perinatal period.'

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## ABSTRACT

Objective: To explore women's views and experiences of having their mental health needs considered in the perinatal period in an Irish maternity hospital setting.

Design: A qualitative design using semi-structured interviews was used to explore women's views and experiences. Data were analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Setting: A voluntary maternity hospital in Dublin, Ireland which had access to a perinatal mental health team.

Participants: In total 8 women who met the inclusion criteria were recruited and participated in this study. The women were interviewed in the early postpartum period.

Findings: The study offers important insights into how women feel about having their mental health needs considered in the perinatal period. Women reported pregnancy was an emotional time, feeling expected to be happy, and women with significant mental health histories preferred not to be referred to available services unless they asked for help. Women reported barriers to disclosure including stigma/shame, lack of time. Screening tools were viewed with mixed opinions. In getting help, the baby was a motivator for some women, attitudes of healthcare professionals and lack of time affected this.

Key Conclusions: Women appreciated all methods of enquiry about their mental health and being given time to discuss concerns with healthcare professionals. Perceived busy staff workloads was a barrier in asking for help, as was lack of continuity of care. Screening tools were viewed as a tick box exercise, but

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