

New research shows that women with inflammatory bowel disease are at greater risk of mental illness postpartum

FOR EVERY 43 PREGNANCIES, THERE IS ONE EXTRA CASE OF MENTAL ILLNESS IN A WOMAN WITH IBD

OTTAWA, January 10, 2019 – A study published today in the journal *Gut* shows that women with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) are at greater risk of developing a mental illness after giving birth compared to the overall population. Study authors found that more than one-fifth of pregnant women with IBD had a new-onset mental health diagnosis. For every 43 pregnancies, there is one extra case of mental illness in a woman with IBD, compared to other women. The study used healthcare data on women who gave birth between 2002 and 2014 in Ontario, Canada to analyze the frequency of a new mental illness diagnosis in these women during and up to one year after a pregnancy.

Inflammatory bowel disease, or IBD, are a group of chronic gastrointestinal disorders in which people have ulceration, inflammation, and bleeding of their gastrointestinal tract, and are at risk for complications in other parts of the body. The two main subtypes are Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. People with IBD have an elevated risk of mental illness, especially anxiety and depression, potentially related to the inflammation in the gut affecting their brain.

“There's increasing awareness about mental illness in women during pregnancy and postpartum,” said Dr. Eric Benchimol, senior author on the paper, and Senior Scientist at the CHEO Research Institute, Core Scientist at ICES, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Epidemiology at the University of Ottawa, and a Pediatric Gastroenterologist at the CHEO Inflammatory Bowel Disease Centre. “Because of the elevated risk of mental illness in people with IBD, we felt it was important to study if women with IBD were at greater risk of developing a new mental illness during pregnancy and after giving birth compared to the overall population. We found the risk to be elevated during the post-partum period for women with IBD, particularly in the first 90 days after birth. We did not find an elevated risk during pregnancy.”

In the study population, pregnant women with IBD had an elevated risk of developing a new-onset mental illness postpartum when compared to women without IBD – 22.7 per cent compared to 20.4 per cent. The women with IBD were at increased risk of two out of the four mental illness diagnostic categories: mood disorders (such as anxiety and depression) and substance use disorders (such as opioid dependency). These women were primarily treated by doctors in the outpatient setting and did not need to be hospitalized. There was no evidence of increased risk for psychotic disorders (such as schizophrenia or hallucinations). The risk appeared elevated in women with Crohn's disease, but not ulcerative colitis.

“This is a small but significantly increased risk of new-onset mental illness in women with IBD,” says Dr. Simone Vigod, lead author of the study, Scientist at the Women's College Hospital Research Institute, Chief, Department of Psychiatry, Women's College Hospital, and Adjunct Scientist at ICES. “Women with IBD face increased health challenges during pregnancy and after giving birth, and it's not

just physical challenges. We need to look at both the physical and mental health needs of women and ensure they are getting the best treatment and support.”

“These findings are very important for both patients and healthcare providers in the IBD community,” says Mina Mawani, President and CEO of Crohn’s and Colitis Canada. “If a pregnant woman with IBD knows that there’s an elevated risk of mental illness during the post-partum period, she should discuss this potential risk with her healthcare provider. It’s important that healthcare providers are aware of this increased risk in women with IBD. Together, women and their healthcare providers can look for opportunities to prevent mental illness during pregnancy and after birth as well as identify and treat it earlier.”

- 30 -

About the CHEO Research Institute

The CHEO Research Institute coordinates the research activities of CHEO and is affiliated with the University of Ottawa. Its three programs of research are molecular biomedicine, health information technology, and evidence to practice research. Key themes include cancer, diabetes, obesity, mental health, emergency medicine, musculoskeletal health, electronic health information and privacy, and genetics of rare disease. The CHEO Research Institute makes discoveries today for healthier kids tomorrow. For more information, visit www.cheori.org

About Women’s College Hospital

For more than 100 years Women’s College Hospital (WCH) has been developing revolutionary advances in healthcare. Today, WCH is a world leader in the health of women and Canada’s leading, academic ambulatory hospital. A champion of equitable access, WCH advocates for the health of all women from diverse cultures and backgrounds and ensures their needs are reflected in the care they receive. It focuses on delivering innovative solutions that address Canada’s most pressing issues related to population health, patient experience and system costs. The *WCH Institute for Health System Solutions and Virtual Care (WIHV)* is developing new, scalable models of care that deliver improved outcomes for patients and sustainable solutions for the health system as a whole.

Women’s College Research Institute (WCRI) is tackling some of the greatest health challenges of our time. Its scientists are conducting global research that advances the health of women and improves healthcare options for all, and are then translating those discoveries to provide much-needed improvements in healthcare worldwide.

For more information about how WCH and WCRI are transforming patient care, visit www.womenscollegehospital.ca and www.womensresearch.ca

About ICES

ICES is an independent, non-profit research institute that uses population-based health information to produce knowledge on a broad range of health care issues. Our unbiased evidence provides measures of health system performance, a clearer understanding of the shifting health care needs of Ontarians, and a stimulus for discussion of practical solutions to optimize scarce resources. ICES knowledge is highly regarded in Canada and abroad, and is widely used by government, hospitals, planners, and practitioners to make decisions about care delivery and to develop policy. In October 2018, the institute formerly

known as the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences formally adopted the initialism ICES as its official name. For the latest ICES news, follow us on Twitter: @ICESOntario

The University of Ottawa—A crossroads of cultures and ideas

The University of Ottawa is home to over 50,000 students, faculty and staff, who live, work and study in both French and English. Our campus is a crossroads of cultures and ideas, where bold minds come together to inspire game-changing ideas. We are one of Canada's top 10 research universities—our professors and researchers explore new approaches to today's challenges. One of a handful of Canadian universities ranked among the top 200 in the world, we attract exceptional thinkers and welcome diverse perspectives from across the globe.