



THINKING HEALTHY

A manual for psychosocial management of perinatal depression

WHO generic field-trial version 1.0, 2015

Series on Low-Intensity Psychological Interventions – 1



**World Health
Organization**

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Suggested Citation: World Health Organization. *Thinking Healthy: A Manual for Psychosocial Management of Perinatal Depression* (WHO generic field-trial version 1.0). Geneva, WHO, 2015.

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Preface

The World Health Organization launched the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) in 2008 and published its first version of the mhGAP- Intervention Guide in 2010. This guide covers assessment and management of mental, neurological and substance abuse disorders by non-specialist providers, such as general physicians, clinical officers and nurses. A series of training manuals were also developed to facilitate capacity building based on the original Intervention Guide.

WHO has now extended this work through the development of a series of manuals describing evidence-based “low-intensity psychological interventions which are modified evidence-based psychological treatments and the present manual is the first of the Series.

The term “low-intensity” indicates a less intense level of specialist human resource use. It means that the intervention has been modified to use much less resources compared to conventional psychological treatments by specialists. As a result, aspects about the intervention are changed to make them feasible in communities that do not have many specialists. Such modifications can thus create more accessible mental health care that reaches a larger number of people. Examples of low-intensity psychological interventions include brief, basic, paraprofessional-delivered psychological treatments as well as self-help books and self-help e-mental health programs. There is an increasing evidence base for such programs.

Women across the globe deserve to enjoy equal health. When they become mothers their health needs should be addressed in all aspects. The Millennium Development Goals have highlighted the importance of maternal and child health and the post 2015 development agenda and the UN Commission on the Status of Women 2014 further stress on gender equality and women’s empowerment, a strategic direction strongly supported by WHO. About 20% of mothers in low and middle income countries suffer from a mental disorder after childbirth. This is almost double the percentage in high income contexts. WHO’s Global Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020 endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2013 recommends comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care and implementation of strategies for promotion and prevention and refers to integrated child and maternal mental health as examples.

This is a manual for training community health workers on how to support mothers with depression through evidence based cognitive behavioral techniques that are recommended by the mhGAP programme. The innovative manual was developed in Pakistan and later applied in many other countries. WHO in collaboration with Prof Rahman and with the advice from an international group of experts, has now produced a generic version of the manual for global use. I hope that you will use this manual, after necessary adaptations for your context and share your feedback with us so that we can further strengthen future revisions.

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