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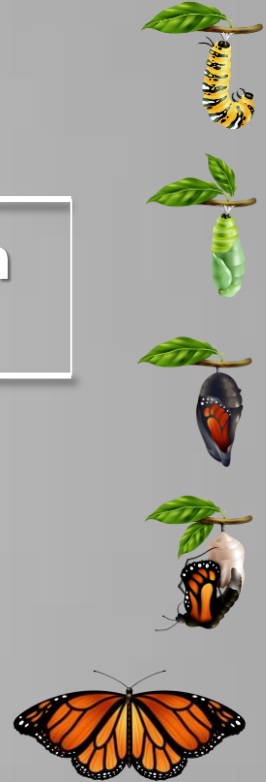
# Postpartum Depression Challenges among a Macedonian Immigrant Mother

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# Introduction - The Fragile Egg

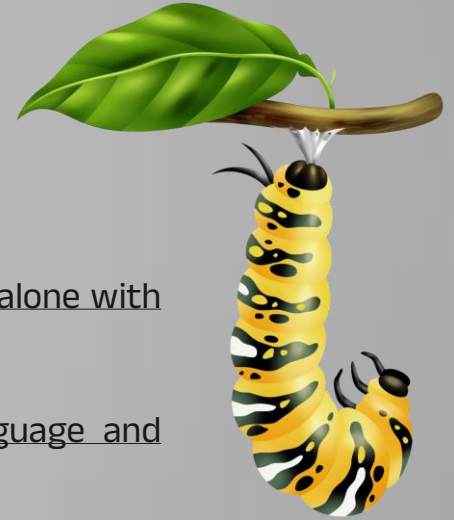
- As healthcare professionals, we must prioritize not only physical health but also mental well-being. Postpartum depression (PPD) is a significant health condition that affects mothers worldwide, especially immigrant women who face challenges in adapting to new environments abroad.
- To better illustrate my case report and her journey, I will compare her experiences to the life cycle of a butterfly.
- Just as a butterfly's life begins with a fragile egg, this mother's journey began with the birth of her baby, marking a time of vulnerability and new beginnings.



# Patient profile - The Caterpillar Stage

Like a caterpillar facing the challenges of growth, the mother encountered the growing demands of motherhood.

- A 28-year-old primiparous woman;
- Natural way of birth, orderly delivered;
- No prior history of mental illness, presented with symptoms indicative of PPD;
- She lives in Austria for 3 years with her husband and spends most of her day alone with her baby, as her husband works;
- She faces significant isolation due to her lack of fluency in the local language and absence of close friends.



# Symptoms -The Vulnerable Chrysalis

The chrysalis stage represents intense transformation and vulnerability, much like the mother's struggle as she sought help, symbolizing a critical phase for potential change.

The symptoms begin one month after the birth of the baby, and they included:

**Anxiety**

**Insomnia**

**Anhedonia**

**Change in appetite**

**Feeling worthless**

**Inability to take care of the baby**

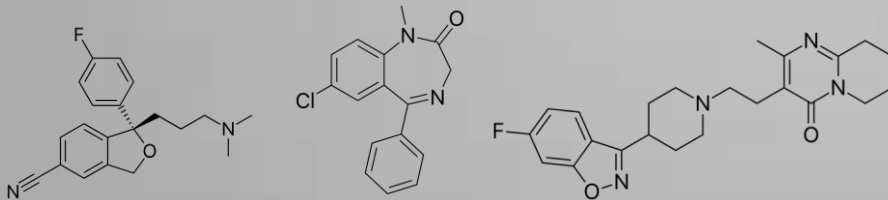


The worsening of her symptoms prompted the family to return temporarily to Macedonia, as suggested by her husband, where her condition became more pronounced.

# Initial Management - The Pupa Stage (Metamorphosis)

During the pupa stage, transformation is tumultuous and uncertain, much like the mother's initial treatment experience, reflecting the trial-and-error process in finding the right support.

- In Macedonia, she had her first psychiatric consultation on December 7, 2023. Initial treatment included Escitalopram (an SSRI) and Diazepam (2 mg).
- However, after a week with no improvement, her treatment was adjusted to include Risperidone (starting at 2 mg, then increased to a full tablet) along with vitamin therapy



**Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)**

Patient Label: \_\_\_\_\_ Mother's OB or Doctor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Doctor's Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Since you are either pregnant or have recently had a baby, we want to know how you feel. Please place a CHECK MARK (✓) on the blank by the answer that comes closest to how you have felt **IN THE PAST 7 DAYS**—not just how you feel today. Complete all 10 items and find your score by adding each number that appears in parentheses (P) by your checked answer. This is a screening test, not a medical diagnosis. If something doesn't seem right, call your health care provider regardless of your score.

*Below is an example already completed:*

I have felt happy: _____ (P)	7. I have been so unhappy that I have had difficulty sleeping: _____ (P)
Yes, all of the time: _____ (P)	Yes, most of the time: _____ (P)
Yes, most of the time: _____ (P)	Yes, sometimes: _____ (P)
No, not very often: _____ (P)	No, not very often: _____ (P)
No, not at all: _____ (P)	No, not at all: _____ (P)

*This would mean: "I have felt happy most of the time" in the past week. Please complete the other questions in the same way.*

1. I have been able to laugh and see the funny side of things: _____ (P)	8. I have felt sad or miserable: _____ (P)
As much as I always could: _____ (P)	Yes, most of the time: _____ (P)
Not quite so much now: _____ (P)	Yes, quite often: _____ (P)
Definitely not so much now: _____ (P)	Not very often: _____ (P)
Not at all: _____ (P)	No, not at all: _____ (P)

2. I have looked forward with enjoyment to things: _____ (P)	9. I have been so unhappy that I have been crying: _____ (P)
As much as I ever did: _____ (P)	Yes, most of the time: _____ (P)
Butter less than I used to: _____ (P)	Yes, quite often: _____ (P)
Definitely less than I used to: _____ (P)	Only occasionally: _____ (P)
Hardly at all: _____ (P)	No, never: _____ (P)

3. I have blamed myself unnecessarily when things went wrong: _____ (P)	10. The thought of harming myself has occurred to me: _____ (P)
Yes, most of the time: _____ (P)	Yes, quite often: _____ (P)
Yes, some of the time: _____ (P)	Sometimes: _____ (P)
Not very often: _____ (P)	Hardly ever: _____ (P)
No, never: _____ (P)	Never: _____ (P)

4. I have been anxious or worried for no good reason: _____ (P)	
No, not at all: _____ (P)	
Hardly ever: _____ (P)	
Yes, sometimes: _____ (P)	
Yes, very often: _____ (P)	

5. I have felt scared or panicky for no good reason: _____ (P)	
Yes, quite a lot: _____ (P)	
Yes, sometimes: _____ (P)	
No, not much: _____ (P)	
No, not at all: _____ (P)	

6. Things have been getting to me: _____ (P)	
Yes, most of the time I haven't been able to cope at all: _____ (P)	
Yes, sometimes I haven't been coping as well as usual: _____ (P)	
No, most of the time I have coped quite well: _____ (P)	
No, I have been coping as well as ever: _____ (P)	

**TOTAL YOUR SCORE HERE ►**

Thank you for completing this survey. Your doctor will score this survey and discuss the results with you.

Verbal consent to contact above mentioned MD witnessed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS). Adapted from the British Journal of Psychiatry, June, 1987, vol. 150 by J.L. Cox, J.M. Holden, R. Sagovsky.



# Family Dynamics and Additional Pressure - Threats to the Chrysalis

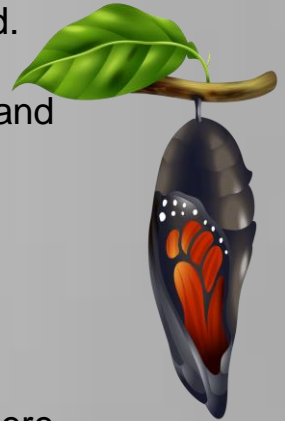
The chrysalis stage is prone to external threats that can stop the transformation, much like the family conflicts that endangered the mother's fragile recovery.

- Despite the new therapy, there was no improvement after 15 days. Her condition was exacerbated by significant pressure from her husband's family, especially her father-in-law, who insisted she was mentally ill and should get a divorce.
- Under this pressure, her husband threatened to take their baby and return to Austria. Meanwhile, her mother blamed her husband for not providing adequate support.
- This situation added immense stress, worsening her mental state.

# Therapeutic Progress - Emerging Butterfly

Emerging from the chrysalis, the butterfly is transformed, yet still delicate, mirroring the mother's gradual improvement and newfound hope as she received proper care and understanding.

- Throughout the treatment process, the importance of family support was emphasized.
- Together and separate psychiatric sessions highlighted the need for understanding and eliminating stressors.
- By March 5, 2024, the patient showed noticeable improvement.
- Family pressure lessened as they better understood her condition.
- The therapy was gradually reduced, and they decided to return to Austria, where continued psychiatric support was recommended.



# Conclusion - The Butterfly Takes Flight

- This case underlines the critical need for early intervention, family support, and continuous monitoring in managing postpartum depression. Raising awareness about PPD and educating families about the condition are essential for effective support.
- The final stage of the butterfly's life cycle is its flight, symbolizing freedom and new beginnings, Just as a butterfly's journey is ongoing, so is the process of managing PPD, inviting further exploration and understanding to support mothers facing similar challenges.

