



SUMMARY

Maternal health issues in the 4th Trimester intersect and can compound one another, necessitating more readily accessible and integrated care in the months following birth.

BACKGROUND

New mothers face a host of physical, mental, financial and social concerns following a birth. To improve health services for postpartum women, formative research is needed to establish what outcomes matter most to mothers, how to measure these outcomes and what interventions are effective to improve these outcomes.

PURPOSE

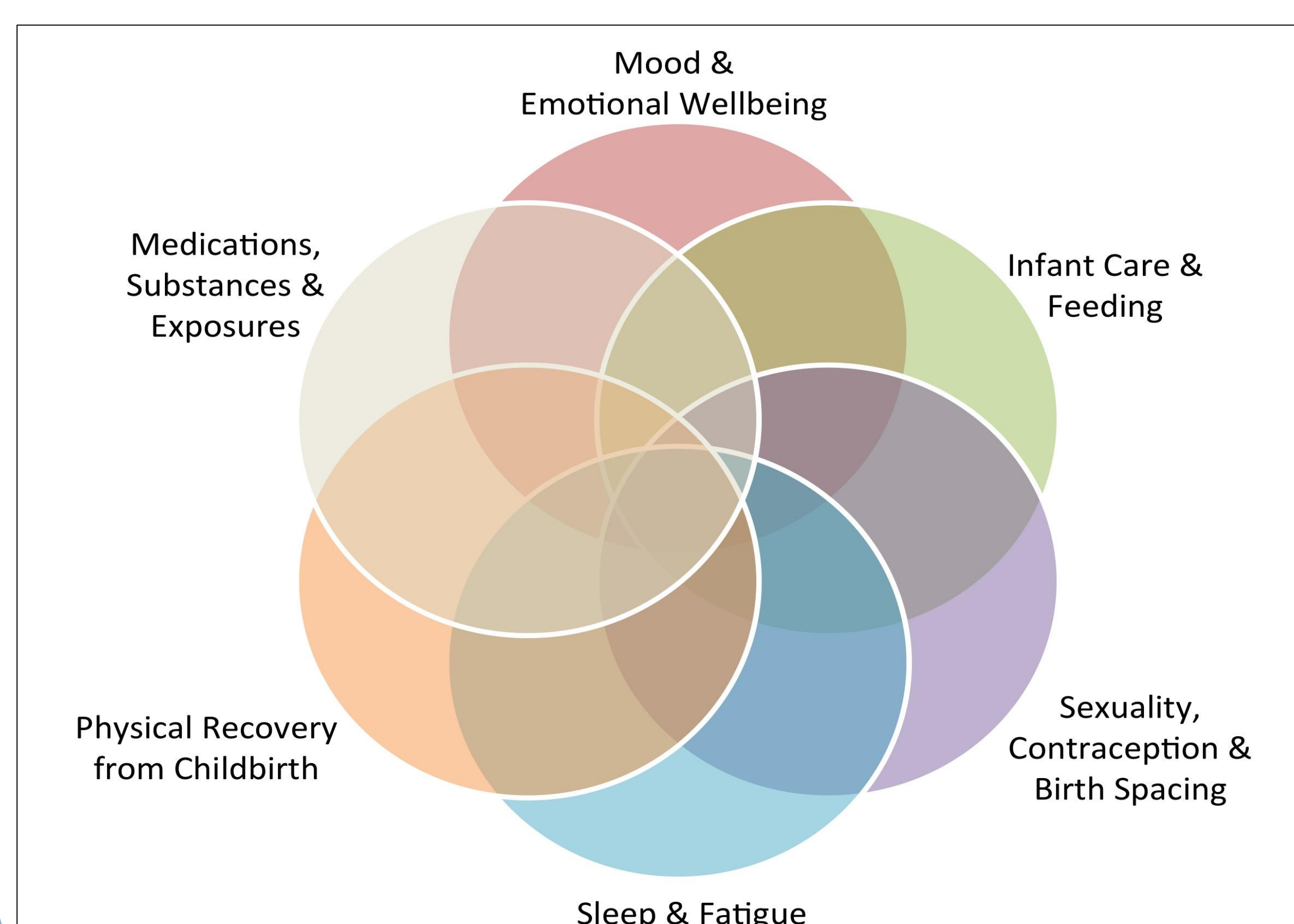
Our goal is to bring together mothers, health care providers, and other stakeholders to define what women and their families need most from birth to 12 weeks postpartum, the “4th Trimester. We aim to expand upon extant work in the field of postpartum maternal health and bring individuals with unique lived experiences and clinical perspectives together to identify testable solutions. This project launched in September 2015 and will run through September 2017.

METHODS

Findings were the result of a patient engagement meeting held on March 23, 2016 in Chapel Hill, NC. A total of 87 individuals attended including 18 diverse new mothers, nurses, physicians, health department staff, researchers, clinic directors, breastfeeding coordinators, public health leaders and many other stakeholders.

Sixteen speakers briefly presented on interrelated themes and there were multiple sessions dedicated to discussion and reflection. Topics covered included: postpartum visits, mood and emotional well-being, weight and body image, medications and environmental exposures, infant care and feeding, fatigue, pelvic floor recovery, contraception, equity, and educational interventions.

Conference monthly webinars have been held with mothers to further discuss a series of topics including postpartum sexuality, communication and worksite policy. The project is using social media extensively to further engage new mothers.



THEMES

1. The intense focus on women’s health prenatally is unbalanced by infrequent and late postpartum care.
2. Clinical guidelines do not always align with women’s experiences and constraints.
3. Validation and empowerment for mothers is necessary to achieve health goals.
4. Holistic care is necessary yet challenging due to systemic barriers.

CONCLUSIONS

- Future research is needed to assess the impact of health care experiences on maternal-infant-family health outcomes, customize anticipatory guidance, and screen on topics that impact women's quality of life. The postpartum period offers rich opportunities for enhancing the well-being of women and affirming the value of their health and happiness, regardless of their childbearing status.
- Maternal health issues in the 4th Trimester intersect and can compound one another, necessitating more readily accessible and integrated medical care over the postpartum weeks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We appreciate the mothers and stakeholders who contribute to the 4th Trimester Project.

Dr. Ben Goodman, and Monica Simpson are partners on this Eugene Washington Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Engagement Award, EAIN-2603.

PCORI is an independent, non-profit organization authorized by Congress in 2010 to fund comparative effectiveness research that will provide patients, their caregivers, and clinicians with the evidence needed to make better-informed health and healthcare decisions. PCORI is committed to seeking input from a broad range of stakeholders to guide its work.

This project was reviewed by the University of North Carolina IRB and determined to be exempt.



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