

**LOYOLA PERINATAL NETWORK NURSING e-JOURNAL CLUB**  
**Neonatal Evidence-Based (EBP) Practice Research Article Critique Summary**  
**April 2026 – June 2026**

**Citation:** Swenson, S. A., Paulsen, M. E., Carrigan, K., Stover-Haney, R., Wilton, D., Skalland, B., Lampland, A. L., Diego, E., Kroupina, M., Osterholm, E. A., & Downey, A. (2025). **Implementation of perinatal mental health screening for parents of infants in a level IV neonatal intensive care unit: A quality improvement initiative.** *Journal of Perinatology*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41372-025-02315-z>

**Critique summary created by:** Lisa Festle, MSN, RNC-NIC, APRN/CNS

**What was the clinical problem discussed in the Evidence Based Practice (EBP) article/study?**

The authors point out that the AAP recommends maternal depression screening as standard of care, yet a standardized method to screen both mothers and partners for Perinatal Mental Health (PMH) disorders longitudinally has not been established for the NICU. More guidance is needed to inform screening tools, referral thresholds, and inclusivity of screening, and further input from parents is critical to ensure that screening meets their needs.

**What was the purpose of this EBP article/study?**

The overall aim of this study was to improve PMH support for families impacted by the NICU through PMH screening, and support across disciplines, education, and feedback from families. The researchers' Smart AIM was to implement standardized longitudinal PMH screening for eligible parents of hospitalized infants in the NICU, at 1-, 2-, 4-, and 6-month intervals of infants' hospitalizations.

**What were the main findings?**

The program exceeded its screening rate goals. Standardized screening significantly improved the identification of mental health concerns. Screening for partners was particularly effective, with detected concerns rising from 6% to 30%. The study concluded that **social worker-led**, standardized PMH screening is a feasible and effective way to identify parental needs beyond the first weeks of NICU admission.

**What interventions were implemented or examined in this EBP article/study?**

While specific tools like the EPDS (Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale) and PHQ-9 are commonly used in such initiatives, this study focused on the process of social worker-led assessment to ensure appropriate referrals for treatment. Pros and cons for when to administer screening was discussed, and a conclusion that future research is needed to understand the optimal intervals and duration of screening for NICU parents. An effort to look at which parents declined screening, and why, was also addressed. Their research led to the development of interventions involving "infant mental health teams" for mother-baby support of hospitalized infants and their families in the NICU.