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(1) Opportunity: Improve Parental Awareness

Many women are not educated about maternal mental health disorders and risk factors during the Perinatal period. Awareness of risk factors, signs and symptoms can assist a family in making proactive decisions to reduce triggers, and seek treatment early when concerns arise.

Recommendations:

a. Modify Birth Class Curriculum

Include overview of maternal mental health disorders including symptoms, triggers and risk factors, the importance of good sleep practices and overview of sleep promotion techniques, and any available maternal mental health treatment programs in the local community.

b. Provide Information at Discharge

Provide writing information and verbal overview of maternal mental health disorders including symptoms, triggers and risk factors, the importance of good sleep practices and overview of sleep promotion techniques, and any available maternal mental health treatment programs in the local community.

(2) Opportunity: Promotion of Sleep

Tending to a newborn disturbs every new mother's sleep, however poor sleep can contribute to postpartum depression and anxiety, and the days surrounding birth are critically important.

Recommendations: Policy Shift

Adopt Policies and Procedures and initiatives to protect sleep during the time surrounding delivery to reduce the sleep interruption during this fragile time, including things like: steps to be taken to reduce noise, scheduling inductions and elective c-sections in the mornings or early afternoons (to encourage a full-nights rest at home), requiring nursing staff to discuss importance of maternal sleep with patients.

(3) Opportunity: Staff Training

Most OBGYNs and clinical staff do not receive formal training during medical school or elsewhere, in maternal mental health disorders.

Recommendations: Train hospital staff who interact with new mothers including MDs, lactation consultants, nurses, social workers, and others.