Title: Sleep; how do we fix this disparity in new mothers?

Authors and Institutions:
Rachael Price Undergraduate Student. The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing
Pat Carter, PhD, RN, CNS. The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing

Introduction: As many people know, sleep is a major determinant in a person’s health. This research paper explores the relationship between sleep quality among new mothers following childbirth, as well as the relationships between depressive symptoms and sleep quality in new mothers. This research is significant to health professionals, including nurses, because sleep is so important to every person’s health. In addition, studies show that a mother’s health correlates to her baby’s health; so decreased sleep among new mothers could be affecting her child as a baby and even later on in life. Through research on this topic, nurses may be able to use the results to adequately help new mothers during their post partum stages. There is no doubt that sleep quality among new mothers is diminished, which leads to additional health disparities. The question is how do we fix this problem in order to benefit mom and baby?

Methods: This research has been completed through a systematic review of the literature available on sleep quality and quantity in new mothers. In addition, research on the health of the baby as a result of new mother’s sleep quality has been assessed.

Results: From this systematic review of the literature, results show that new mothers experience extreme sleep disruptions. In fact, women who have perceptions of poor sleep report more mood and postpartum disturbances. Most studies also showed that sleep quantity increases the most during the first three months of pregnancy and decreases the most during the first three months after giving birth. Overall, new mothers are getting less sleep, which is effecting labor duration, infant birth rate, and the mother’s health.

Conclusion: There is no doubt that in today’s society new mothers are getting less sleep after childbirth which is affecting their health. Our goal as health professionals should focus on ways to decrease the prevalence of this problem through different interventions concentrated on mother and baby.