

Women's Mental Health in Post-Soviet Ukraine- A Capacity Building Initiative

Myroslava Romach, Sofiya Vlokh, Oleh Romanchuk, James Rutka

Departments of Psychiatry and Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Department of Psychiatry, Lviv National Medical University, Lviv, Ukraine

Institute of Mental Health, Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv, Ukraine

Background

Ukraine is a LMIC country in transition from a post-Soviet legacy Reforms in healthcare, including the mental health system, are ongoing

There continue to exist high levels of stigma and discrimination against people with mental health problems creating barriers to seeking and obtaining appropriate care

The direction of transformation is towards adoption of internationally recognised diagnostics, evidence –based guidelines of care and community programs

Introduction

The initiative described in this poster, the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program, is part of capacity building collaborations between the University of Toronto and SickKids Hospital, Toronto and the Ukrainian Catholic University and Danylo Halytsky National Medical University in Lviv (population 730,000), Ukraine

The focus of the program is on Brain Disorders in children-brain tumours, neurosurgical disorders, epilepsy and other neurological disorders, perinatal maternal mental health as it relates to modulating infant and child neurodevelopmental outcomes

Our Program began as a grass roots initiative in 2013 and is growing incrementally

The primary component is the training of medical professionals in the community to screen for, diagnose and treat perinatal maternal mental health problems

Methods

Annual teaching visits take place with a team of clinicians from SickKids Hospital. Lectures, seminars, case discussions and facilitation of evidence-based care are the format

A public awareness campaign about peripartum mental health disorders has been conducted over the past 4 years:

Multiple seminars by the authors to medical professionals (obstetricians, family doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, neonatologists) in hospitals and the community

Distribution of informational pamphlets and posters; informational posts on social media; media interviews

Monthly presentations on psychological health and infant attachment to pregnant women in maternity hospitals

A community-based survey on the prevalence of perinatal anxiety/depression in pregnant women receiving care in 3 major maternity hospitals in Lviv is ongoing

We have implemented a treatment research study on prevention of postpartum depression using a CBT protocol

We are developing an online educational program about perinatal mental health disorders for healthcare providers

Results to date

10 teaching visits to Ukraine have been completed

Perinatal Maternal Mental Health is now recognized as an important clinical issue by community clinics and government agencies in Lviv

The internationally used screening instrument, Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale, (EPDS) has been translated into Ukrainian and is being validated

An ongoing prevalence survey (N=180 to date) of perinatal anxiety/depression symptoms in pregnant women in 3 major local maternity hospitals in Lviv showed 15.6% of women had EPDS scores>13 (clinically significant) and 35.6% of women had Spielberger State Anxiety Inventory scores >31 (moderate anxiety)

A Perinatal Mental Health consultation and treatment (CBT based) service in a community clinic has been established

Conclusions

- We provide a framework for building capacity in Perinatal Maternal Mental Health in a LMIC country
- Through a public awareness campaign, we have promoted the importance of recognizing and treating Perinatal Mental Health problems to positively influence child neurodevelopment
- We have emphasized a multidisciplinary approach to care
- We have contributed to local efforts to decrease the stigma of perinatal maternal mental health disorders
- We have assisted in the development of a treatment research initiative to provide evidence- based support for treatment interventions
- Our Initiative serves as a pilot model of care that can be implemented in other cities of Ukraine

Fig.1 Teaching at the Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv, Ukraine - Maternal mental health and mechanisms of epigenetics in modulating child neurodevelopment

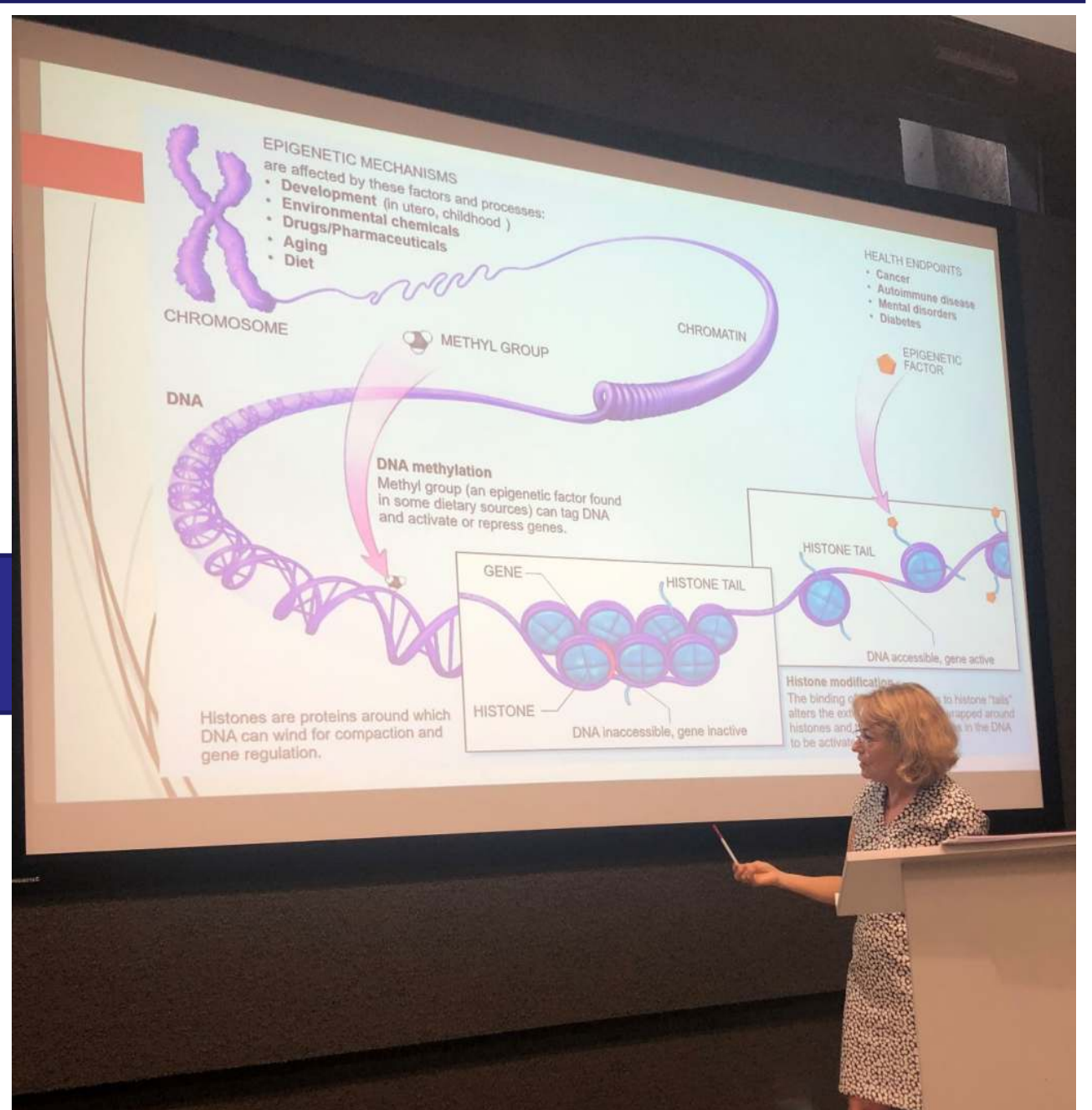


Fig.2 Poster raising awareness about Perinatal Maternal Mental Health in Community Settings in Lviv, Ukraine -Prevalence and symptoms of Perinatal Maternal Depression

