Trajectories of Change in Maternal and Adolescent Depressive Symptoms in the Depression Prevention Initiative

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BACKGROUND: Given the prevalence and consequences of adolescent depression, depression prevention has become an important area of research. While prevention programs like Interpersonal Psychotherapy - Adolescent Skills Training (IPT-AST) have demonstrated effectiveness, little research to date has studied the relationship between maternal depression and adolescent outcomes in these programs. METHOD: The current study investigated the relationship between maternal and adolescent depressive symptoms in 167 mother-adolescent dyads who were enrolled in the Depression Prevention Initiative (DPI), a randomized controlled trial that compared IPT-AST to group counseling (GC). First, the study examined the relationship between initial levels of adolescent and maternal depressive symptoms. The study then investigated whether maternal depressive symptoms improved over the two-year study period. Finally, the study assessed whether maternal and adolescent symptoms changed concurrently across time. RESULTS: Results indicated that initial levels of maternal and adolescent symptoms were positively associated. Additionally, maternal symptoms improved across the two-year period. Maternal and adolescent outcomes were related across time: as adolescents improved in our study, their mothers also improved. LIMITATIONS: The study utilized self-report data only and did not allow for the testing of causality in the relationship between mother-youth depression. CONCLUSIONS: These findings add to the literature demonstrating that as one part of the mother-child dyad improves, the other improves as well. These findings extend the current understanding of the relationship between maternal and adolescent depressive symptom outcomes, and have important implications for the prevention and treatment of depression.

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