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Study focuses on Postpartum Depression and NICU moms



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OMAHA, Neb. (WOWT) -- A groundbreaking program at Nebraska Medicine is focusing on moms in the NICU. Their screenings have shown the numbers for NICU moms battling Postpartum Depression is double the incidence of moms outside the NICU.

For Deseray Stevenson, the birth of her second baby was anything but serene. She woke up one day with horrible contractions and she was 28 weeks and 2 days into her pregnancy when Daliyla was born. She came into this world weighing just over 2 pounds. As Daliyla battled for her life, Deseray was facing a battle of her own.

"Feeling that I was a horrible mom because I couldn't be there every minute to make sure she was okay," she said.

Deseray says she also had trouble sleeping, she had no appetite, and she felt really emotional. Dr. Ann Anderson-Berry says Deseray isn't alone. As Medical Director of the NICU at Nebraska Medicine, she saw an unaddressed problem.

"We decided to institute screening our NICU moms to see what our levels of Postpartum Depression moms were in the NICU population," Dr. Anderson-Berry said.

The numbers were astonishing. Dr. Anderson-Berry says 28 percent of moms in the NICU screened positive for Postpartum Depression. This is nearly double the incidence of moms outside of the NICU.

"These moms have been sick. They've had complicated pregnancies and it's a lot of stress," she said.

Dr. Anderson Berry says when they saw the actual number of NICU mothers Postpartum Depression impacts, they realized how important this program is and they hope it continues to grow.

"It's already been presented at national meetings, it'll be published. So we'd like to see this in NICU's-not only across Omaha and the region-but nationwide," said Dr. Anderson-Berry.

The program has been helping moms like Deseray since last July.

It's an eleven question screening tool. Mothers are screened at 7 days after birth, a month, then monthly until their baby is discharged from the NICU. Nebraska Medicine has developed a wide referral network to help these mothers once they are diagnosed.

"It takes a village to raise a child and it really takes a village to get some of these moms through some really dark days," said Dr. Anderson-Berry.

This program made all the difference to Deseray. After counseling and medication to treat her depression, she says she feels wonderful.

After her baby girl spent 82 days in the NICU, she is proud of this moment.

"This is Miss Daliyla Belle Thompson. It is July 20th 2016 her due date...and today we finally get to go home. It's amazing," Deseray said.

Dr. Anderson-Berry says she is proud of how far this family has come.

Again, this program is the only one in the State of Nebraska to offer help for these NICU mothers.

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