



Département de psychiatrie  
Centre de neurosciences psychiatriques  
Site de Cery  
CH-1008 Prilly - Lausanne

# Centre de Neurosciences Psychiatriques

## CNP SEMINAR

### ANNOUNCEMENT

Friday, June 7, 2019, 14:00

### “Development of an early intervention aimed at preventing the intergenerational transfer of perinatal trauma-related consequences”

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Salle de séminaires 1<sup>er</sup> étage CNP  
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Up to one third of women perceive childbirth as traumatic and some may as a consequence develop postpartum posttraumatic stress disorder (ppPTSD). ppPTSD is a highly distressing condition with symptoms of re-experiencing, avoidance, negative cognitions and mood, hyperarousal, as well as social and professional dysfunction. In community samples, ppPTSD affects between 3–4 % of women after birth and around 16–19 % of women in high-risk groups, e.g., emergency cesarean section (ECS). Some evidence shows the intergenerational transfer of perinatal trauma-related consequences. For example, two large prospective cohort studies found associations between maternal ppPTSD symptoms and infant troubled sleep at 2 years<sup>1</sup> and poor child social–emotional development at 2 years<sup>2</sup>. However, evidence-based early interventions to reduce maternal intrusive traumatic memories to prevent the development of ppPTSD, and thus the transfer of trauma-related consequences onto the future generation are lacking. Results from a proof-of-principle randomised controlled study (NCT02502513) showing that the number of intrusive traumatic memories mothers experience after ECS could be reduced by a brief computerized cognitive intervention protocol carried out in the early aftermath of traumatic childbirth will be presented<sup>3</sup>. This represents a first step in the development of an early and potentially universal intervention to prevent postnatal PTSD symptoms after traumatic childbirth. A subsequent multi-center double-blind randomized controlled trial Swiss TrAumatic biRth Trial (START; NCT03576586) is now testing whether this early intervention may benefit both mother and child and investigating the underlying physiological mechanisms of the intergenerational transfer of trauma.

#### References

- 1) Garthus-Niegel S\*, Horsch A\*, Bickle Graz M, et al. The prospective relationship between postpartum PTSD and child sleep: A 2-year follow-up study. *Journal of Affective Disorders* 2018;241:71-79. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.07.067>
- 2) Garthus-Niegel S, Ayers S, Martini J, et al. The impact of postpartum post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms on child development: a population-based, 2-year follow-up study. *Psychol Med* 2017;47(1):161-70. doi: 10.1017/s003329171600235x [published Online First: 2016/09/30]
- 3) Horsch A, Vial Y, Favrod C, et al. Reducing intrusive traumatic memories after emergency caesarean section: A proof-of-principle randomized controlled study. *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 2017;94:36-47. doi: <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2017.03.018>