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Abstract

Maternal Depression, Parental Investment, and Child Development

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We evaluate the medium-term impacts of treating maternal depression on women's mental health, financial empowerment, and parenting decisions. We leverage variation induced by a cluster-randomized controlled trial that provided psychotherapy to 903 prenatally depressed mothers in rural Pakistan. It was one of the world's largest psychotherapy interventions, and it dramatically reduced postpartum depression. Seven years after psychotherapy concluded, we returned to the study site to find that impacts on women's mental health had persisted, with a 17 percent reduction in depression rates. The intervention also improved women's financial empowerment and increased both time- and money-intensive parental investments by between 0.2 and 0.3 standard deviations.