



## Iterative (Re)Design of a Virtual Postpartum Depression Intervention with Latina Mothers

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### Project Overview

Postpartum depression (PPD) is the most common pregnancy complication and affects approximately one in eight women in the U.S. Women of color experience higher rates of PPD, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when existing health disparities have been compounded. Latina women specifically are the least likely to receive postpartum mental health care. Virtual care options may make evidence-based psychosocial interventions more accessible to Latina mothers by providing access to a broader pool of clinicians, reducing stigma through privacy, and eliminating structural barriers such as transportation and time constraints. The objective of this pilot research is to apply a human-centered design approach to: 1) discover the challenges and barriers in using virtual mental health platforms to treat PPD among Latinas, and 2) design a prototype that supports the virtual delivery of PPD treatment for Latinas in ways that are acceptable, feasible, and equitable.

Our study design includes two phases: 1) a nationally representative survey of postpartum women in the U.S. to understand their experiences during COVID-19 and attitudes toward virtual therapy, and 2) remote interviews and design sessions with Latina mothers to assess the acceptability of a digital prototype for PPD treatment.

### Population/Sample

Discover Phase: 500 postpartum women. 72% of participants identified as White, 13% as Black, and 5% as Latina. The median age of participants was 30 years and 77% reported being married.

Design/Build Phase: 7 Latina mothers participated in remote interviews via text messages to follow up on survey findings regarding virtual therapy; 3 Latina mothers participated in text interviews to elicit feedback on an existing virtual PPD intervention tailored to Latinas; and 10 Latina mothers participated in remote video interviews to assess the acceptability and usability of a tailored digital prototype for the virtual delivery of PPD treatment.

### Key Findings

#### Discover Phase

- 67% of participants reported depressive symptoms according to the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale
- 27% reported having spoken to a mental health professional since giving birth; half of these encounters were remote
- Virtual encounters occurred via video (66%) and text message (13%)
- Among participants who had received postpartum mental healthcare, the degree of satisfaction with virtual encounters was significantly lower among Latinas compared to non-Latinas

- Top concerns for accessing virtual therapy: privacy (47%), cost (46%), time (27%), trust (27%)

### Design/Build Phase

- Latina mothers did not report discomfort with speaking to an unknown therapist; would prefer therapist recommendations from a doctor or family/friend
- Latina mothers liked the idea of text message conversations with a therapist to increase privacy
- Positive response to the Mothers & Babies (M&B) online intervention and usability of prototype that integrates M&B into existing behavioral health application (Ginger)
- High intervention usability and system usability results

### Measures used

- [Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale](#)
- [Coronavirus Perinatal Experiences – Impact Survey \(COPE-IS\)](#)
- [Intervention Usability Scale](#)
- [System Usability Scale](#)

### Methods

#### Discover Phase

- Online survey, Administered via [Prolific.co](#), with nationally representative sample (N=500)
- Open and closed-ended survey: demographics, depressive symptoms, reflections on postpartum experience during a pandemic, perspectives on virtual therapy, barriers to care

#### Design/Build Phase

- Asynchronous text interviews
- Synchronous design sessions and interviews via Zoom
- Digital static prototype with think aloud usability testing

### Next steps

We are currently preparing manuscripts based on the discover phase survey data and analyzing qualitative data from the design/build phase interviews.

### Recommended readings

Gonzalez, C., Ramirez, M., Diaz, A., Duran, M., & Arean, P. (2021). [Expanding virtual postpartum mental health care for Latina women: A participatory research and policy agenda](#). *Women's Health Issues*, 31(2), 96-99.

Gonzalez, C., Ramirez, M., Mata-Greve, F., Diaz, A., Duran, M., Johnson, M., Grote, N., & Arean, P. (in press). Acceptability of virtual therapy for postpartum women during COVID19: A national mixed methods study. *Frontiers in Psychiatry-Digital Mental Health*.