

# **The “Just Ask” Project: Supporting Physician Practice with Postpartum Women in Durham Region**

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# Why “Just Ask” ?

- Postpartum mood disorders constitute a major public health problem for women and their families
- Building on four year PPMD initiative
- Primary health care providers are in a good position to assess women’s mental health during the postpartum period and it is critical that they are supported in doing so effectively

# Why “Just Ask” ?

- The “Just Ask” Project was designed to support primary health care providers in assessing, diagnosing and treating PPMD in Durham Region
- Our overall goal was to encourage the primary health care providers in Durham Region to “Just Ask” all postpartum women about their mental well being

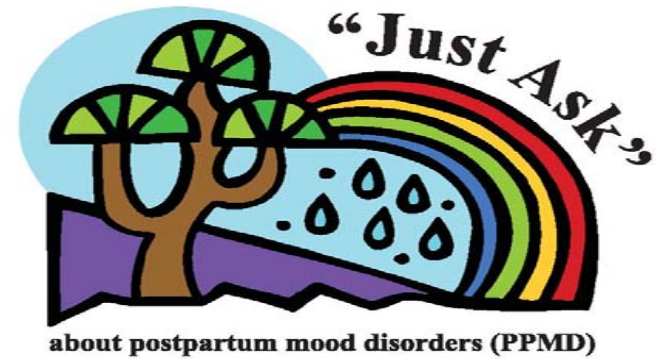
# Acknowledgements

The “Just Ask” Project was made possible through a Healthy Babies Healthy Children one-time grant from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Much of the project content was collected and modified with permission from:

- Best Start: Ontario’s Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre-Life With A New Baby Provincial PPMD Campaign
- Postpartum Depression: A guide for front-line health and social service providers (2005), Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

# Objectives



- To increase awareness, knowledge and skills related to signs and symptoms, screening, diagnosis and treatment of postpartum mood disorders
- To increase capacity to identify and support women with postpartum mood disorders and their families
- To distribute an in-office resource to aid in practice, screening for postpartum mood disorders and referring to appropriate local supports/services

# Target Audience

375 primary health care providers in Durham Region

- 313 Family Physicians
- 18 Ob/Gyn
- 18 Psychiatrists
- 6 Nurse Practitioners
- 20 Midwives

# Project Overview

The “Just Ask” Project involved many phases including:

- Development of resources
- Project Launch
- Mailout
- Evaluation

# The “Just Ask” Resources

The following “Just Ask” resource materials were developed upon reviewing the literature and considering best practice for supporting primary health care providers:

- Desk Reference
- Chart stickers
- Patient tear – offs
- Reminder pens
- Additional promotional items

# Desk Reference



about postpartum mood disorders (PPMD)

Background

Why  
"Just Ask"

Signs &  
Symptoms

Risk  
Factors

Barriers to  
Detection

Screening

Screening  
Tools

Decision  
Tree

Chart  
Sticker

EPDS

Treatment

Treatment  
Options  
PPMD

Durham  
PPMD  
Resources

# Chart Sticker



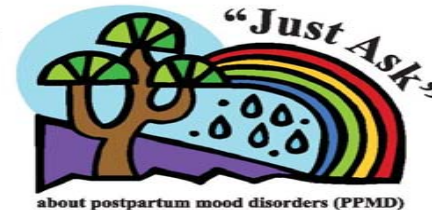
**about postpartum mood disorders (PPMD)**

- Can you sleep when baby sleeps?
- Are you eating? What are you eating?
- Do you get out?
- Are you having any scary or repetitive thoughts about you or your baby?

# Patient Tear-offs

## Taking care of yourself... is part of being a parent

- Take time for yourself**  
Take some time everyday to do something that you enjoy doing. It is very important to make time for yourself. Remember: it is not selfish. By looking after yourself, you'll be better able to take care of your baby.
- Get as much sleep and rest as you can**  
Be sure to sleep when the baby sleeps and get extra rest whenever possible. Lack of sleep affects your ability to cope and can contribute to you feeling overwhelmed with the daily demands of a new baby.
- Limit your visitors**  
Protect your rest periods and do not feel like you need to entertain visitors. Leave your answering machine on, post "do not disturb" signs and let visitors know what visiting times are most convenient for you.
- Try to have realistic expectations about motherhood**  
Be gentle with yourself. Do not compare yourself with others. It takes time to adjust to life with a new baby, and every mother's experience is different.
- Eat well**  
Provide your body with the nutritious fuel it needs to function properly. Keep healthy snack foods on hand (eg. fruit, carrot sticks, yogurt, granola bars, crackers and cheese etc) and be sure to drink plenty of fluids daily.
- Accept help from others**  
There is no shame in asking for or accepting help from others. Every mom needs help sometimes and may benefit from assistance with: preparing meals, caring for baby, doing housework etc. Be specific about what you need from your partner, family, friends and others.
- Get connected**  
Connect with someone who listens and understands. Keep in touch with family, friends and other adults. Join a new mothers group or mom/baby exercise class. Learn about the community supports in your area.
- Get some fresh air and exercise**  
Try to get out of the house for a short walk with the baby or on your own on a regular basis. This moderate exercise helps to improve overall energy levels and relieve stress.
- Pay attention to how you are feeling**  
Know your limits and acknowledge when you are feeling overwhelmed, stressed and need a break. Be sure to talk to people who support you (e.g. family and friends) or call a doctor, nurse or counsellor.



# The “Just Ask” Project Launch

**WELCOME**



about postpartum mood disorders (PPMD)

September 27th, 2007



**Sponsored by the  
Ministry of Children &  
Youth Services**

# The “Just Ask” Project Launch

- Mailed/Faxed Invitations to target audience
- Half-day educational event & hot breakfast
- Venue-Golf & Country Club
- Medical Officer of Health-Welcome Address
- Keynote Speaker-Dr. Diane de Camps Meschino-MD FRCP(C)
- Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits
- Certificate of Attendance
- 17 attendees completed a Satisfaction Survey

# The “Just Ask” Project Launch

- Brief Overview of the “Just Ask” Project, how to use the resources and obtain additional copies
- Each attendee received a “Just Ask” Courier bag containing:
  - Desk reference
  - Chart Stickers
  - Patient Tear-offs
  - Large Notepad
  - Post-it Notes
  - Reminder Pens
  - EPDS Tear-offs \*

# The “Just Ask” Mailout

- Mailout sent to target audience following the launch
- All received a cover letter outlining the “Just Ask” Project and encouraging them to use the resources in their practice and provide feedback in a follow-up evaluation survey
- All received a package including the resources provided at the launch

# The “Just Ask” Evaluation

- Purpose of the evaluation survey was to determine the effectiveness of the “Just Ask” Project in supporting primary health care providers in assessing, diagnosing and treating PPMD in Durham Region
- A 10 question survey using Likert scaling was developed in consultation with E&E at the Health Department
- The survey was reviewed and pre-tested for question clarity and understanding

# The “Just Ask” Results

- A total of 25 evaluation surveys were returned via mail, fax and online
- Survey response rate of 6.7% (25/375)

Characteristics of those who responded:

15 males (60%) and 10 females (40%)

92% were Family Physicians

64% averaged 15 >years in clinical practice

4% reported attending the “Just Ask” launch

Table 1

*Characteristics of Participants*

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Characteristics	n	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	10	40
Male	15	60
<b>Professional designation</b>		
Family physician	23	92
Nurse practitioner	1	4
Primary nurse	1	4
<b>Years in clinic practice</b>		
0-4 years	3	12
5-9 years	4	16
10-14 years	2	8
15-24 years	10	40
25 years or more	6	24

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# The “Just Ask” Results

- Overall, 84% of respondents were very satisfied (32%) or satisfied (52%) with the “Just Ask” resource material
- Very few respondents reported that they were not very satisfied (12%) or not at all satisfied (4%) with these same materials

# The “Just Ask” Results

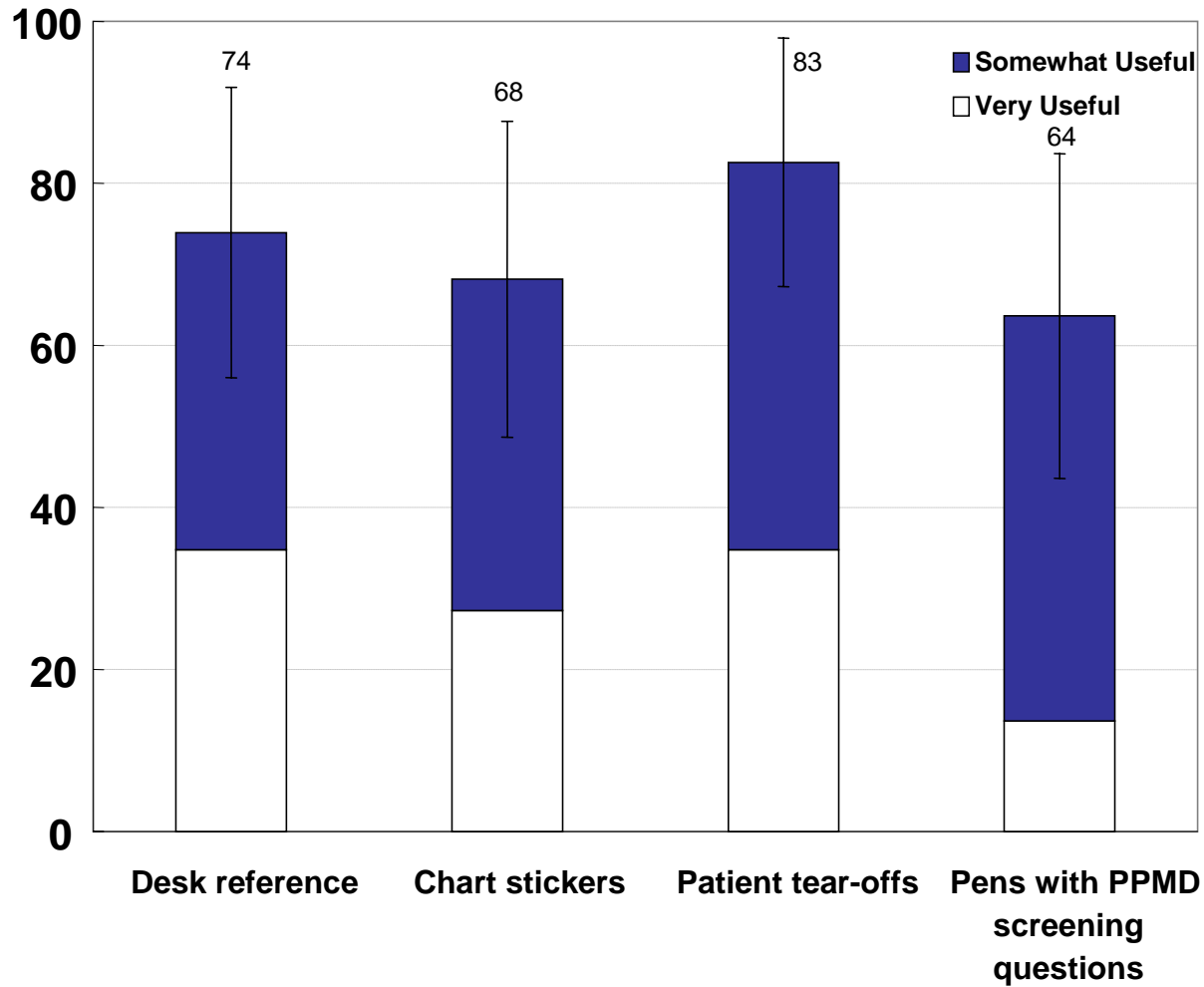
Listed in increasing order of usefulness, indicated by a rating of somewhat useful or very useful are:

64% Reminder pens with questions

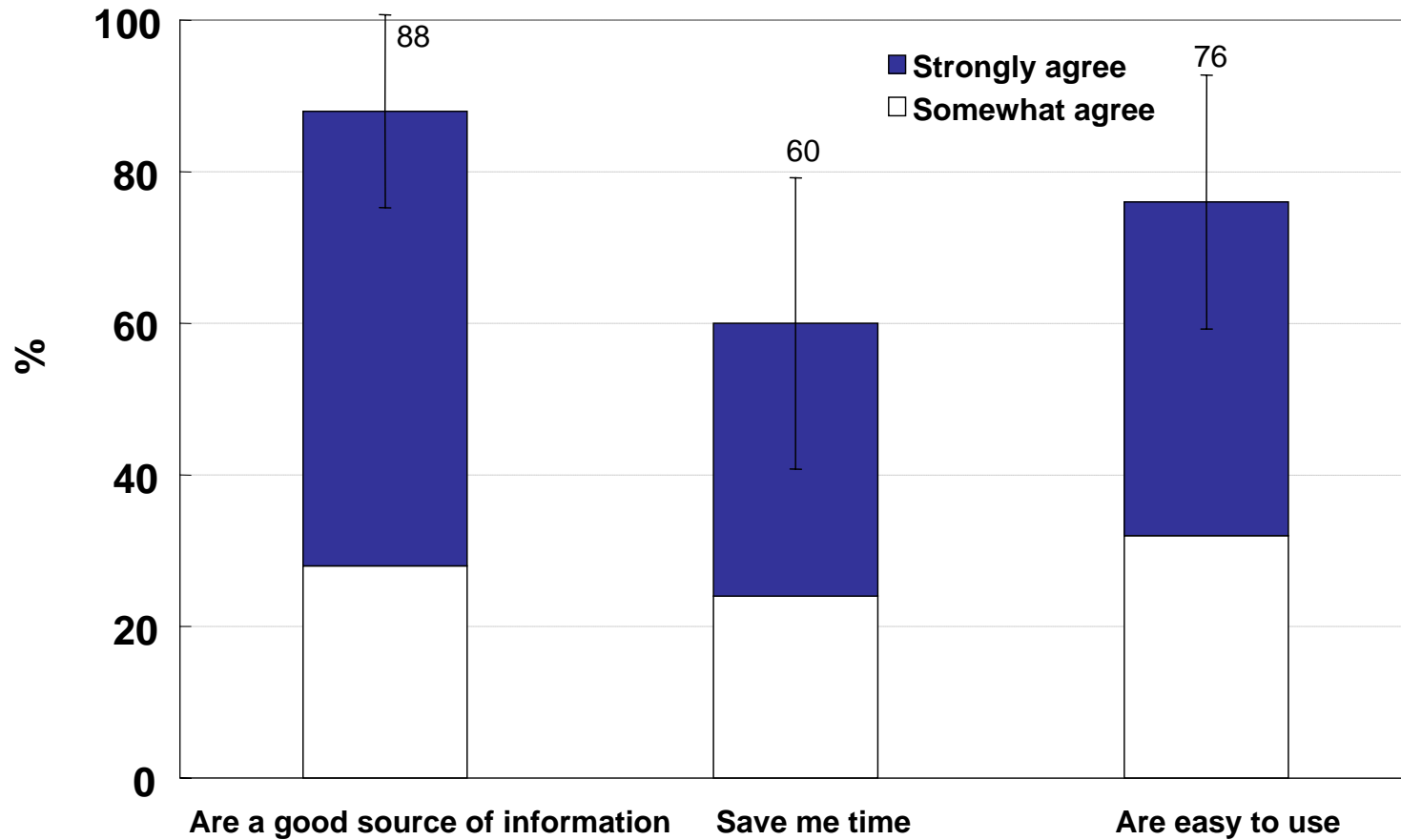
68% Chart Stickers

74% Desk Reference

83% Patient Tear-offs



**Percent of respondents who rated the usefulness of the “Just Ask” materials as somewhat useful or very useful**



**Percent of respondents who strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement about the "Just Ask" material**

# The “Just Ask” Results

% of respondents who somewhat or strongly agreed that each statement was a result of the “Just Ask” desk reference:

More aware of:

PPMD Screening Importance 72%

PPMD Screening Tools 76%

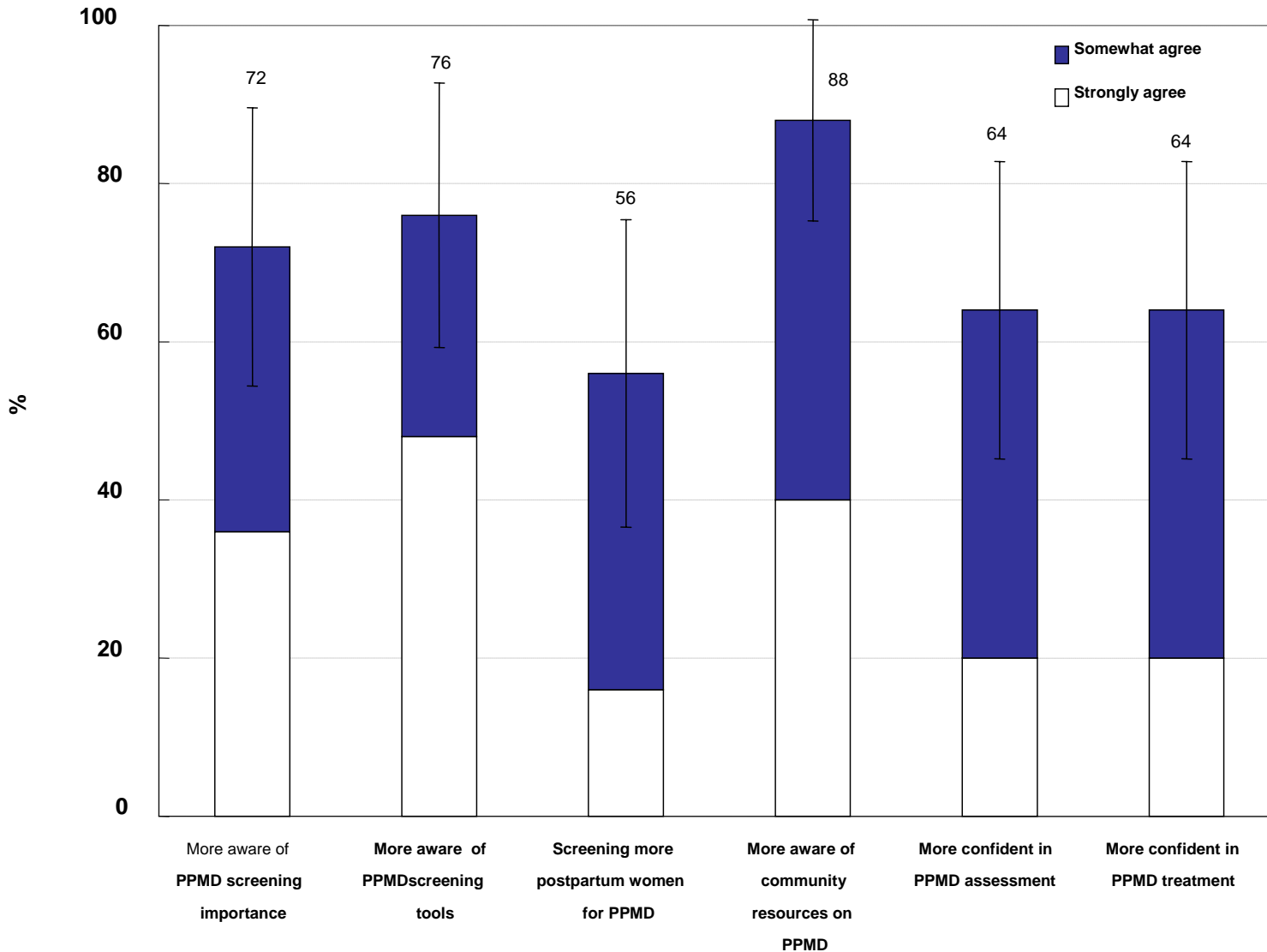
Community PPMD Resources 88%

More confident in:

PPMD Assessment 64%

PPMD Treatment 64%

Screening more postpartum women 56%



**Percent of respondents who strongly or somewhat agreed that the statement was a result of the "Just Ask" desk reference**

# The “Just Ask” Results

- 64% of primary health care providers reported that they were somewhat or very likely to use the “Just Ask” resource materials in the future
- Other general comments included: requests for a smaller desk reference, interest in electronic resources and positive feedback on the resources

# Limitations

- The project design was not conducive to the rigor associated with experimental research
- The mailed evaluation survey made it impossible to determine the demographics or characteristics of the non-respondents and their reasons for not participating

# Limitations

- The “Just Ask” Project spanned from September 2007-January 2008, which resulted in the need for survey completion over the holiday season
- Low response rate of 6.7% was disappointing, yet not entirely surprising

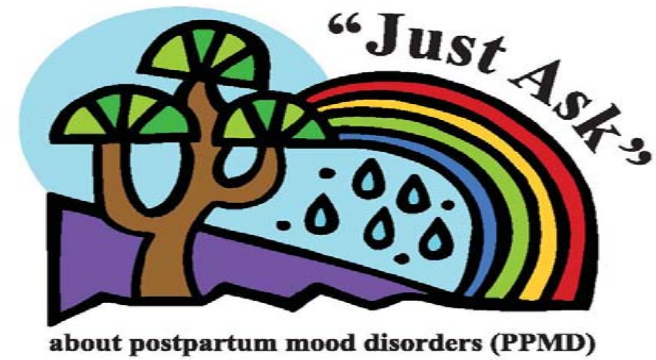
# Summary

- The “Just Ask” Project results have provided some basic information on the preferences of local primary health care providers
- The “Just Ask” Project evaluation results will be used to improve the quality of future outreach strategies for primary health care providers in Durham Region

# Summary

- By working collaboratively with local health professionals to increase awareness, early identification, diagnosis and treatment for postpartum women experiencing PPMD, many women will receive the help they so desperately need, helping to end the “silent suffering” in our community.

# For more information



- Visit [www.region.durham.on.ca](http://www.region.durham.on.ca)
- Call Durham Health Connection Line  
1-800-841-2729

# The “Just Ask” Project



about postpartum mood disorders (PPMD)