Mom’s Successful Depression Treatment Also Improves Kid’s Mental Health

March 22, 2011

Kids whose parents suffer from major depression are at increased risk of psychiatric disorders, but when mothers say good-bye to depression, their children are likely to say hello to better mental health as well, according to findings published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* and reported by HealthDay News.

For this study, researchers analyzed 80 women with depression and their children, ages 7 to 17, in a U.S. National Institute of Mental Health trial. The trial targeted patients with depression who didn’t respond to first, second and third treatment attempts.

Researchers found that when a mother’s depression improved, her child reported fewer symptoms of psychiatric disorder and an improved level of functioning at home and school. What’s more, if the mother’s depression lingered longer before lifting, her child’s symptoms of psychiatric disorders still improved—but the child’s daily functioning did not.

In addition, children whose mothers didn’t respond to treatment for more than two years showed no improvement in psychiatric disorder symptoms—and they exhibited an increase in disruptive behavior.

This study shows that when treatment chases away a mother’s depression—even if it takes a while—it can have major positive effects on her children, said Myrna Weissman, PhD, a professor of epidemiology and psychiatry at Columbia University Medical Center.

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