



Group-based child care is linked to reduced emotional problems in preschool children of depressed mothers

Fewer social withdrawal symptoms than with maternal care are also reported

Montreal, CANADA, June 20, 2013 – Child care is linked to fewer emotional problems and symptoms of social withdrawal among children exposed to maternal depression, according to a new study of nearly 2000 children conducted by researchers in Montreal, Canada, at the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), and University of Montreal.

"We found that children exposed to maternal depression during the preschool years were nearly two times more likely to develop emotional problems and separation anxiety symptoms. However, regular child care attendance of at least 8 hours per week was linked to a more positive outcome for these children, such as reduced chances of developing emotional problems and symptoms of social withdrawal" reported Dr. [Catherine Herba](#), a researcher at Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center who is the lead author of the study, as well as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at UQAM, and affiliated with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Montreal.

Entering child care at a younger age (i.e. before 17 months of age) or later in the preschool period was associated with similarly beneficial effects. Most importantly, it was not the intensity of exposure that was linked to lower levels of emotional problems, but rather the type of child care arrangement that proved most crucial, the key being regulated group-based child care – either in a family environment or a daycare center. Child care arrangements with family members or babysitters, usually individual care within the child's home, were not associated with reduced risk of developing emotional problems in these children. "Further work needs to be done for us to understand the exact mechanisms responsible for this effect", Dr. Herba added. "However results clearly point toward the benefits of regulated group-based child care for children exposed to symptoms of maternal depression during their preschool years. This could be due to the more structured setting; care provided by trained professionals; the child being out of their home; or exposure to other children of a similar age."

Dr. [Sylvana Côté](#), a co-author of the study, also noted that "it is important that we support young families, particularly those at risk, by providing access to quality child care services". Dr. Côté is also a researcher at Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center and associate professor in the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Montreal.

About the study

The study "Maternal Depressive Symptoms and Children's Emotional Problems Can Early Child Care Help Children of Depressed Mothers?" was published in the prestigious journal [JAMA Psychiatry](#) on June 19, 2013. Findings were based on the Quebec longitudinal study of child development. The study was supported by the Québec Government's Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, the Fonds de recherche du Québec - Santé, the Fonds de recherche du Québec - Société et culture, Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center, and the University of Montreal. Researchers from the Université du Québec à Montréal, the Université de Montreal, Université Laval, and University College Dublin contributed to this study. Data was collected and managed by the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center chu-sainte-justine.org/research

The Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center is a leading mother-child research institution affiliated with the Université de Montréal. It brings together more than 1200 people, including over 200 researchers and 400 graduate and post-graduate students who carry out fundamental, clinical, translational, and evaluative research on mother and child health. Research work falls under six research axes, namely Health Outcomes; Brain Diseases; Musculoskeletal Diseases and Movement Sciences; Viral and Immune Disorders and Cancers; Fetomaternal and Neonatal Pathologies; and Metabolic Health. It is focused on finding innovative prevention means, faster and less invasive treatments, as well as personalized approaches to medicine. The Center is part of the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Centre, which is the largest mother-child centre in Canada and second most important pediatric center in North America.

University of Montreal (officially Université de Montréal) umontreal.ca

Deeply rooted in Montreal and dedicated to its international mission, the Université de Montréal is one of the top universities in the French-speaking world. Founded in 1878, the Université de Montréal today has 16 faculties and together with its two affiliated schools, HEC Montréal and École Polytechnique, constitutes the largest centre of higher education

the Montreal and Essor Polytechnique, constitutes the largest centre of higher education and research in Québec, the second largest in Canada, and one of the major centres in North America. It brings together 2,500 professors and researchers, accommodates more than 60,000 students, offers some 650 programs at all academic levels, and awards about 3,000 masters and doctorate diplomas each year.

Université du Québec à Montréal uqam.ca

Located in the heart of one of the most beautiful metropolises in North America, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) is defined by its urban character and its openness to the world. It is a public, French-language university, with a campus in one of Montreal's most stimulating neighbourhoods, reminiscent of European charm in the heart of French North America. The quality of its programs, its research activities grounded in social concerns, and its innovations in the arts have helped establish UQAM's reputation at home and around the world. A window on the world, UQAM integrates an international dimension in all its programs, and attracts students from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It has established a network of international partnerships that facilitates exchanges and joint activities abroad for its students and faculty members. UQAM is signatory to the Berlin Declaration on open access to knowledge in the sciences and the humanities.

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