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RESEARCH



The
Martin House
RESEARCH CENTRE



**THE HEALTH
OF MOTHERS
CARING FOR
CHILDREN WITH
LIFE-LIMITING
CONDITIONS**

MARTIN HOUSE RESEARCH CENTRE

The issue

Many children in the UK live with medical conditions that may shorten their life, which is often referred to as a life-limiting condition. Mothers of these children commonly end up coordinating and providing their child's healthcare for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is likely to impact their mental and physical health, yet very little research has explored this. The NHS and other statutory services for these children also rarely provide support for parents.

The research

This study used data collected in GP surgeries and hospitals to examine the rates of common mental and physical health conditions in mothers after their child was diagnosed with a life-limiting condition. Using data for 35,000 mothers, we found the rates of these health conditions were higher in mothers of children with a life-limiting condition when compared to mothers whose children had other long-term conditions, eg asthma, or no long-term conditions. For example, depression was 20 per cent higher and heart disease was 75 per cent higher when compared with mothers of children with no long-term conditions.

The outcome

This study demonstrates the higher rates of common and serious physical and mental health problems in mothers of children with a life-limiting condition. Further research is required to understand how best to support these mothers, and healthcare providers should consider providing preventative and treatment services.

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