

MGH Institute of Health Professions

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Janice Goodman Testifies for Postpartum Depression Bill

January 28, 2010

With the help of Associate Professor Janice Goodman, PhD, RN, PMHCNS-BC, Massachusetts could become the first state to mandate that health care providers regularly screen for postpartum depression.

Speaking at the Massachusetts Statehouse before the House of Representatives Joint Committee on Financial Services on Jan. 28, Dr. Goodman testified on behalf of House Bill 3897, *An Act Relative to Postpartum Depression*.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to put Massachusetts in the forefront of this issue,” she said, shortly after being part of a press conference in front of hundreds of bill supporters and postpartum depression survivors. “We’re trying to educate the public and the providers who know little about this illness.”

The bill would require OB/GYNS, midwives, pediatricians and other primary care providers to screen mothers regularly for depression during pregnancy and during the first year of their baby’s lives. The bill also would mandate these procedures be covered by insurance.

According to Rep. Ellen Story, D-Amherst, the bill’s sponsor, enlisting Dr. Goodman will help bring to light a condition she says affects 15% of mothers in Massachusetts.

“Janice is a nationally known expert in this field, and we had to have her testify,” said Rep. Story. “We’re thrilled that she’s doing this. We’re very fortunate to have her come to the hearing.”

Dr. Goodman last fall was named a Nurse Faculty Scholar by the prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. It included a \$350,000 competitive award to study postpartum depression and mother/infant relationships.

Several barriers need to be overcome, according to Dr. Goodman, including the fact that many health care professionals continue to be unaware of the signs of postpartum depression; and a stigma among many families who have difficulty accepting that postpartum depression is a mental illness.

The bill, which was endorsed by the Boston Globe on Feb. 1 and the advocacy group Health Care For All, also will include provisions to create referral lists of clinicians and support groups throughout the state, and institute a campaign to educate health care professionals and the general public about the illness.



State Rep. Ellen Story, left, and Nursing Faculty Dr. Janice Goodman at the Statehouse.

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