“Cyclone Babies”: Maternal Accounts of Pregnancy During Severe Cyclone Events in Queensland, Australia.

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Purpose
- We aimed to better understand the firsthand experiences of mothers pregnant during cyclones, how they derived meaning from their surroundings, and how this could influence their behavior.
- Identifying similarities and differences in individual experiences would provide insight into maternal vulnerability and resilience to cyclone stressors.

Background / Methods
- Stress induced changes to the in-utero environment can affect fetal development and increase the risk of later life disease[1].
- Cyclone exposure has been associated with preterm births, low birthweight, and labour complications[2].
- Twelve mothers participated in semi-structured interviews. Transcripts were coded and thematic analysis was used to identify major themes. We present preliminary findings from this analysis.

Maternal Characteristics
- Mothers varied in their age, location and cyclones experienced.

Significance
- In Australia, research into individual maternal experiences of disaster related stressors remains limited while research supporting the associated adverse outcomes is growing[3, 4].
- As we continue to adapt to severe weather events, understanding stressors for pregnant women, a health risk priority group, is crucial to better prepare and mitigate impact.

Themes
Drivers of risk perception
- Looking out for others / others looking out for them
- Familiarity with cyclones
- Being pregnant in the lead up, during and after a cyclone
- Convergence of experiences
- Navigating emergency protocols

Maternal Experiences
Drivers of risk perception
- Awareness and evaluation of cyclone risk communication
- Social media, internet & apps
- News, television & radio
- Visual
- Word of mouth
- Sensationalisation
- Other information sources

- Maternal appraisal of cyclone events
- Introspection and feelings
- Awareness of experience and recollection of events
- Gratitude and perspective

Quotes
“...probably the local radio station or local news from the BoM. I'm not actually big on social media and certainly wasn't back then either.”

References

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