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Maternal Stress and Breastfeeding Intention in Pregnant Women with Opioid Use Disorder

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Introduction: Breastfeeding rates are low among women in treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD). Information on determinants of breastfeeding intention can help inform the design of breastfeeding promotion interventions for this population. The objective of the study was to examine associations between maternal characteristics, including stress, and breastfeeding intention among pregnant women in treatment for OUD.

Methods: Fifty-six pregnant women who were receiving treatment for OUD at Thomas Jefferson University's Maternal Addiction Treatment Education & Research (MATER) program completed a survey, which included questions on demographics, psychosocial characteristics, breastfeeding history, and breastfeeding intention. Maternal stress was measured using the *Perceived Stress Scale-10* (PSS). Characteristics and PSS scores were compared between women who intended to breastfeed and women who did not.

Results: The majority of the participants were white (63.2%), smoked (73.7%), in committed relationships (56.1%), and with at least one other child (70.2%). Total PSS scores were not significantly different between women with intention to breastfeed and women without (19.9 vs. 19.6, $P=0.874$). Breastfeeding intention was higher in women who had a history of breastfeeding (94.5% vs 61.9%, $P=0.021$). Women who smoked were less likely to report breastfeeding

intention than women who did not smoke, though results were not statistically significant (74.4% vs 80%, $P=0.739$).

Conclusion: Future studies with larger sample sizes would be useful to further evaluate the association between breastfeeding history and breastfeeding intention. If an association is found, future interventions promoting breastfeeding in women undergoing treatment for OUD could focus on women who have not previously breastfed.