Managing ADHD in Pregnancy: A Decision-Making Guide on Medication Use

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BACKGROUND

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by symptoms such as difficulty focusing, overactivity, and impulse control.
- Approximately 3% of adult women and 4% of gender-diverse adults assigned female at birth have ADHD, with many receiving diagnoses during their reproductive years.
- Managing ADHD symptoms during the perinatal period can often become difficult, as this period imposes a great organizational burden in managing appointments and preparing for the baby.
- **Experts recommend that health care providers support patients in shared decision making regarding the use of ADHD medications during pregnancy; however, few resources are available to guide this process.**

PURPOSE

To develop a patient resource to support people with ADHD to decide whether to take ADHD medications in pregnancy.

METHODS

Creating the patient resource was an iterative, collaborative, and multi-step process (Figure 1).

- An exploratory literature review was conducted in PsycINFO to investigate factors that pregnant people with ADHD consider when making decisions related to medication use during pregnancy.
- One-on-one interviews were conducted with three health care providers with expertise in managing ADHD in the perinatal period [occupational therapist, midwife, and certified ADHD coach] and three patient and lived experience advisors [who had personally navigated this decision] to investigate how to create a meaningful patient resource in terms of content and design.
- Findings from the literature review and interviews were synthesized to create a patient resource using Canva software.
- Software tools assessed the grade level of the writing to promote accessibility for patients of all health literacy levels, which also complemented feedback on the draft resource, including its accessibility, from the advisors and supervisory team.

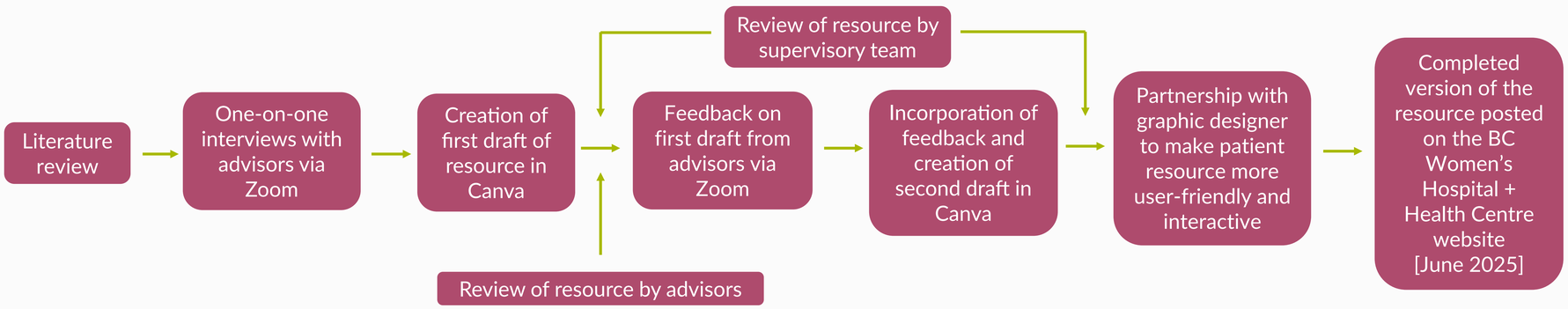

Figure 1: Process map of steps in the development of the patient resource.

THE GUIDE

- We have created a six-page guide to support people with ADHD to decide whether to take ADHD medications in pregnancy (Figures 2 and 3).
- The guide addresses key topics, e.g., the safety of ADHD medication use in pregnancy, the implications of untreated ADHD during pregnancy, and strategies for effective management of ADHD symptoms without medication use.
- This resource fills a critical gap in care by providing an evidence-based, accessible guide tailored to the unique needs of individuals with ADHD navigating the perinatal period.

Figure 2: Cover of the patient resource.

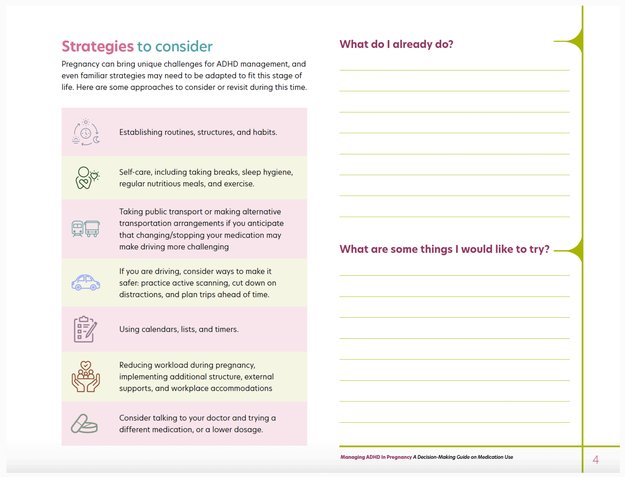

Figure 3: Page 4 of the patient resource.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Further exploration for this resource could include evaluating its impact on patient knowledge and decision-making, expanding its scope to include postpartum considerations, and translating it into multiple languages for broader accessibility.

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