

The British Journal of Psychiatry 167: 799–805 (1995)

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Life events and miscarriage

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BACKGROUND: The aetiology of miscarriage is poorly understood. The aim of this study is to determine whether women admitted to hospital with miscarriage have experienced more psychosocial stress in early pregnancy than women whose pregnancies progress to labour. **METHOD:** Interviews of 48 case-control pairs, matched for known predictors of miscarriage risk, using the Life Events and Difficulties Schedule. **RESULTS:** The miscarriage group were more likely to have experienced a "severe life event" in the three months preceding miscarriage (35% v. 15%; $P < 0.05$); more likely to have been experiencing a "major social difficulty" (31% v. 4%; $P < 0.002$); and more likely to have experienced "life events of severe short-term threat" in the fortnight immediately beforehand (31% v. 4%; $P < 0.002$). Fifty-four per cent of the miscarriage group had experienced at least one of the above indicators of psychosocial stress before miscarrying, compared with 15% of controls ($P = 0.0001$). Other factors significantly associated with miscarriage included childhood maternal separation; non-UK European origin; poorer reported relationships with partners, and fewer social contacts. **CONCLUSION.** Psychosocial stress may be a factor in the aetiology of miscarriage. Alternatively, there may be a common determinant (e.g. personality, lifestyle or environmental) predisposing to both stress and miscarriage.

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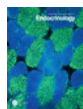
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