Meta-analysis of interventions aiming to improve maternal-child attachment security
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Introduction
• Early secure maternal-child attachment relationships lay the foundation for children’s healthy social & mental development.
• Interventions targeting maternal sensitivity and maternal reflective function (the capacity to think about your own and others’ emotions and thoughts) during the first year of infant life may be the key to promoting secure attachment.
• Earlier reviews included a variety of interventions not directly focused on promoting maternal sensitivity or reflective function, such as those focused on social support or mental health interventions. Other reviews included observational designs.

Purpose
• To determine the effectiveness of direct interventions focused on either maternal sensitivity or reflective function, conducted during the infant’s first year of life, on maternal-child attachment security.
• Secondary goals: (1) the effectiveness of direct interventions on a range of outcomes including maternal-child interaction, infant behaviour and development, and maternal mental health, (2) characteristics of successful interventions, and (3) updating information from the previous reviews.

Materials & methods
• We conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to examine the effectiveness of interventions aimed at promoting maternal sensitivity and reflective function on maternal-child attachment security, as measured by the gold standard Strange Situation and Q-set.

Results & Conclusions

Results:
• Overall, sensitivity and reflective functioning interventions improved the quality of maternal-infant interactions with gains observed for both mother and infant. Improvement in child behaviour and modest gains in social-emotional competence were observed.
• Interventions had little or no effect on maternal depression, stress or parenting efficacy.

Conclusions:
• Interventions aimed at improving maternal sensitivity alone or in combination with maternal reflection, implemented in the infant’s first year of life, are effective in promoting secure maternal-child attachments.
• Intervention aimed at highest risk families produced the most beneficial effects.

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