

# Postpartum Support Virginia

Hope and help for new mothers



**August 2018**

## **Update From The Research World**

*Good news! Clinical trials are showing great results with new medications to treat postpartum depression*

*\*\*\* Includes info about study sites for BOTH studies \*\*\**

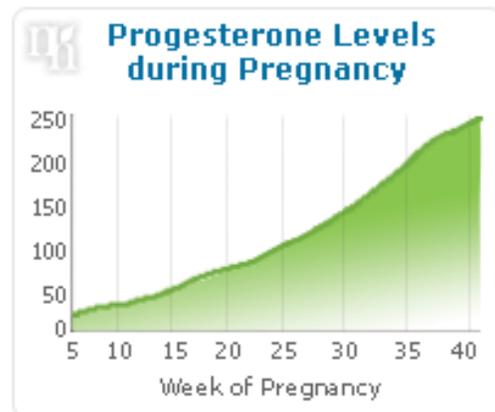
Two companies are testing medications specifically designed to treat postpartum depression (PPD). The new medications are progesterone compounds in both IV (infusion) and tablet (oral) forms. Patients in the trials are often experiencing symptom relief **within a few days**.

Progesterone is a naturally-produced hormone that is key to the mother's brain function and the baby's development during pregnancy. The level of progesterone builds gradually over the course of pregnancy, peaking just before labor. Within two to three days post-delivery, progesterone levels drop to pre-pregnancy levels.

In other words, progesterone increases slowly over many **months** during pregnancy, but then plummets precipitously in a matter of **hours**.

The brain is highly responsive to progesterone.

In fact, progesterone concentrations in the brain have been shown to be 20 times higher than in the blood. Studies show that progesterone has an anti-anxiety effect by acting on certain chemicals and receptors in the brain. Researchers have long thought the dramatic drop in progesterone following labor and delivery may be one of the causes of PPD.



SAGE Therapeutics has completed testing an infusion for women with moderate-to-severe PPD with most patients showing vast improvement. Samantha Meltzer-Brody, MD, a psychiatrist involved with the clinical trials, described the change in a woman's posture, affect, and demeanor akin to what

happens when a thirsty plant is watered. SAGE is awaiting FDA approval for the infusion and has launched a trial studying an oral application; learn more [HERE](#).

***UVA in Charlottesville is a test site for the SAGE study.  
Contact Madelyn Aman at 434-243-4631 or click [HERE](#).***

Marinus Pharmaceuticals is also testing infusion and oral applications. The first study, named the Magnolia Study, is an IV-infusion for women experiencing severe PPD. The second study, named the Amaryllis Study, is testing an oral (tablet) medication for women experiencing moderate PPD. Learn more [HERE](#).



***VCU in Richmond is a test site for the Marinus studies.  
Contact Mary Callender at VCU at 804-464-7405 or click [HERE](#).***

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### ***So why are these studies so important?***

Current medications that treat anxiety and depression focus on specific neurotransmitters in the brain, primarily serotonin and norepinephrine. These medications often take several weeks to provide relief from symptoms.

The new progesterone-related medications focus on GABA, a different neurotransmitter in the brain that plays an important role in promoting calmness, good mood, and sleep. Women involved in the studies report symptom relief in a matter of hours or days, rather than weeks.

This is great news for women suffering from moderate-to-severe PPD and the healthcare providers who care for them as it offers another option for treating the MOST COMMON complication of pregnancy and childbirth. Moreover, this is the first time medications are being developed specifically to treat PPD. Women's mental health, which has long been at the bottom of the list of healthcare priorities, is FINALLY getting much-deserved attention, including research dollars.

***Thank you, SAGE and Marinus,  
for providing hope and help to new mothers.***

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*Hope and help for new mothers*

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