



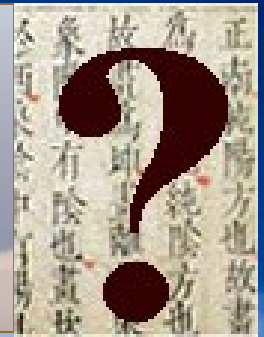
# POST-NATAL DEPRESSION

**GIOVANNI MACIOCIA**

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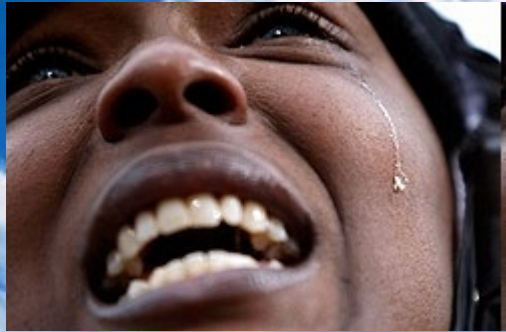
Strangely enough, the condition of post-natal depression is not mentioned in modern Chinese books and the discussion of it here draws primarily on old gynaecology and obstetrics books.



Post-natal depression is explained in Chinese medicine mostly with a pathology of Blood: the exertion and loss of blood occurring at childbirth induce a state of Blood deficiency; since the Heart houses the Mind and governs Blood, Heart-Blood becomes deficiency, the Mind has no residence and it becomes depressed and anxious.







**This causes a state of depression, mild anxiety, insomnia and fatigue: on a mental level the mother feels unable to cope, she is tearful, she loses any libido, and she may feel angry or guilty.**

**From Blood deficiency, other conditions may develop: after some time, and in women who have a predisposition to Yin deficiency, Blood deficiency may give rise to Yin deficiency and Empty Heat. This would cause a more severe condition of depression with more intense anxiety, insomnia, mental restlessness and agitation.**



**Conditions of neurotic, obsessive, phobic or psychotic behaviour after childbirth are usually due to stagnant Blood harassing the Mind (rather than the more common Phlegm-Heat).**



**In such cases, the woman is not only depressed but also confused, she may display obsessive behaviour or phobias and, in extreme cases, she may manifest psychotic or even schizophrenic behaviour.**

**She may be aggressive and offensive, she may have hallucinations and delusions and she may display suicidal tendencies and even harbour destructive thoughts against her baby.**





In old China, there were various conditions describing the above situations. *Chan Hou Wang Yan Wang Jian* (产后妄言妄见) means “absurd speaking and absurd seeing after childbirth”: this indicates a delusional state with incoherent speech and hallucinations.





*Chan Hou Wang Yan Jian Gui Fa Kuang* (产后妄言见鬼发狂) means “absurd speaking, seeing ghosts and manic behaviour after childbirth” and it indicates incoherent speech, visual and acoustic hallucination and hypomania.



It was described by Wu Qian in his “Golden Mirror of Medicine” (1742).<sup>1</sup>

*Chan Hou Xu Fan* (产后虚烦) means “mental restlessness after childbirth” and it indicates a state of mental restlessness, insomnia, and a feeling of heat in the evening, normally associated with Yin deficiency.



1. Wu Qian 1977 Golden Mirror of Medicine (Yi Zong Jin Jian), People's Health Publishing House, Beijing, vol. 3, p. 88. First published in 1742.