How are obstetric complications related to risk of bipolar disorder?

Obstetric complications are a broad class of deviations from a normal course of events experienced during pregnancy, labour, delivery and the early neonatal period. Studies have attempted to investigate whether any deviation or combination of deviations are related to the subsequent development of bipolar disorder. Teasing out possible effects of obstetric complications is not simple because many other, and often unknown, contributing factors are most probably involved.

What is the evidence for obstetric complications as risk factors for bipolar disorder?

Moderate to low quality evidence suggests a large effect of increased risk of bipolar disorder with gestational age under 32 weeks, and a medium-sized effect with gestational age between 32 and 36 weeks. Low birth weight (<2500g), accompanied by gestational age under 37 weeks may also increase the risk in female, but not male, offspring. A medium-sized effect was found for planned caesarean. There were no associations between bipolar disorder and emergency caesarean, gestational age, apgar score, birth presentation, birth type, uterine bleeding or induced labour.

For more information see the technical table

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