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By Tambelli Renata & Trentini Cristina

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MATERNAL DRUG ADDICTION: INFLUENCES ON MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND ON EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT**De Palo Francesca (1), Porreca Alessio (1), Simonelli Alessandra (1)**

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Much literature has pointed out parental drug addiction as a risk factor at multiple levels for the dyad, affecting parenting quality, child development and more globally the adult-child relationship. Drug addicted mothers are often reported as less sensitive, more intrusive and less able to regulate negative affects during early adult-child interactions. On the other hand, children of addicted mothers are often described as more irritable or more passive. The aim of this research was to investigate longitudinally the quality of adult-child relationship and of child interactive and emotional development in a group of drug addicted mothers and their children prenatally exposed to substances. The study involved 25 mother-child pairs (with children aged between 2 and 24 months) with drug addicted mothers. The dyads were followed for a 15 months-period and assessed regularly (every 3 months) through the application of the Emotional Availability Scales (EAS – Biringen, 2008) to videotaped free play interactions. In this way it has been possible to consider both the mothers' and the children's contribution to the development of their relationship.

The results were controversial, showing on one hand changes related only to specific EA dimensions and on the other hand patterns of changes that seemed characteristics of specific patterns of emotional availability. Dyads that initially showed interactions of better quality tended to improve their relationship during time, whereas dyads that exhibited more difficulties at the beginning of the study did not show improvements. Moreover, children of dyads which experienced interactions of better quality showed better interactive and emotional features than children of dyads characterized by more dysfunctional patterns of interaction. Dyads characterized by maternal drug addiction are often reported to be at higher risk for experiencing difficulties during everyday interactions and more likely to be associated to less optimal developmental outcomes. Anyway the results of our study highlight that, despite the condition of drug addiction, experiencing a relationship of good quality could be associated to better mother-child interactions and to more functional interactive and emotional development for children.