The current unpublished data, based on three regression analyses, show that poor sleep is the missing link between early physical symptoms and late depression. Fatigue was the most commonly reported physical symptom at both the early and later interviews (94% and 92%, respectively).

“The path seems to travel from severe physical symptoms early to poor sleep throughout, and then to depression later in pregnancy. Clearly, these results show that physical symptoms early in pregnancy might be a key risk factor for depression later on in pregnancy. Now we must consider other moderators in this relationship, there might be other things that contribute to this equation.”

She also mentioned that 15% of the women in the study rated very high on the anxiety measure. “These women were very anxious about the delivery and what it might mean to their education, career, and general way of life,” Dr. Skouteris said. “We’re now exploring these subjective ways a woman feels about her pregnancy, and their possible relationship between stress, anxiety, and depression throughout pregnancy and into the postnatal period.” This study will provide more data about these links, since the women will be assessed monthly instead of twice. □