# Abstracts

Poster: 0124

**Work Organization and Postpartum Health of Employed Mothers Twelve Weeks After Childbirth**

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**Broad Importance of the Research Problem:** Mothers of infants are one of the fastest growing segments of the American labor force, yet relatively little is known about the association of work organization with women's recovery from childbirth.

**Purpose:** To identify work-organization factors associated with women's postpartum health at 12 weeks after childbirth.

**Summary of Methods:** A prospective cohort of employed women, ages 18 and older, were recruited from hospitals in 2001 and interviewed at enrollment, 6 and 12 weeks after childbirth. 661 women completed the 12-week interview (81% of 817 enrollees). Dependent variables included physical and mental health (SF-12) and childbirth-related symptoms. Independent variables included maternal and infant characteristics and work organization factors. Multivariate models were estimated with two-stage least squares.

**Summary of Findings:** At 12 weeks after delivery 50% of women had returned to work. On average, women experienced four (SD: 3.2) childbirth-related symptoms, most commonly fatigue, headaches, back/neck pain and sexual symptoms. Multivariate analyses revealed that better preconception health, no prenatal mood problems, no breastfeeding, more perceived control over work and home activities, more social support at home and work, fewer job-related psychological demands and less job stress were associated with better postpartum health for one or more dependent variables.

**How the Findings Advance the Research:** Work-related factors such as job stress, psychological demands and coworker support should be explored as modifiable factors that influence women's postpartum health.

**How the Findings Can Be Used to Improve Workplace Health:** These mothers continued to experience several childbirth-related symptoms 12 weeks after delivery, indicating a need for rest and recovery beyond the traditional 4 to 6 week postpartum period. Occupational health providers should evaluate women upon return to work to assess fatigue levels and other symptoms, including those related to breastfeeding and adaptation to work. Women may need help to identify ways to decrease job stress, increase control over work and home activities and enlist social support.

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