

Abortion and miscarriage bring psychiatric risk

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Drug and alcohol problems and psychiatric disorders are more likely in women who have had an abortion or miscarriage, a University of Queensland study has found.

Her research uses data from a long running Brisbane-based birth cohort study, which started in 1981 and followed a group of mothers and their children over 21 years.

PhD candidate Kaeleen Dingle found that young women who lost a pregnancy were more susceptible to depression, anxiety, alcohol dependency and illicit substance abuse than women who had never been pregnant.

Provided by University of Queensland

Ms Dingle said her study expanded on recent evidence that suggested abortions were associated with later psychiatric disorders, by finding miscarriage held the same risks.

“Our findings suggest that this increased risk of psychiatric problems in some women after an abortion may be associated with pregnancy loss rather than caused by the experience of having an induced abortion,” she said.

“We found that young women having a miscarriage or an abortion were three times more likely to experience a drug or alcohol problem during their lifetime.”

Ms Dingle said the study had implications for caregivers, who may need to give more counselling and support to women who have lost a pregnancy.

“Also, health professionals involved in the care of young women with mental health problems need to take good pregnancy histories, as young women can have complex pregnancy histories involving births, miscarriages and abortions,” she said.

Ms Dingle's PhD project is examining common mental health outcomes of young people who enter adulthood earlier than their peers through circumstances such as early parenting, early live-in parenting and early independent living.

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