



## **Beware the Highlight Reel: Comparing Yourself with Other Parents Online Associated with Depression**

*Study findings have implications for social media use and mental health among parents*

**WASHINGTON, D.C., March 6, 2019** – Parents who compare themselves to other parents on social media have a much higher risk of depression, new research from the University of Pittsburgh suggests.

The results of this study will be presented Wednesday, March 6, at the Society of Behavioral Medicine's 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting & Scientific Sessions.

Researchers surveyed 528 parents about their social media use, depression, and self-comparison to other parents on social media. For every 1-point increase on the 7-point parental social media comparison scale, the odds of depression increased 56 percent.

"While social media can be helpful to parents to share information, it also facilitates constant access to potentially unrealistic portrayals of parenting," said lead author Jaime E. Sidani, Ph.D., M.P.H., C.H.E.S., Assistant Director of the University of Pittsburgh Center for Research on Media, Technology, and Health (MTH). "Exposure to these unrealistic portrayals may make parents feel inadequate, and sometimes even depressed."

"It may be that parents begin to experience more depressive symptoms because of the self-comparison experiences they have on social media," said senior author Brian A. Primack, M.D., Ph.D., Director of MTH. "However, it may also be that parents who are already experiencing depressive symptoms tend to compare themselves to other parents while using social media. Either way, these are important findings. But sorting out directionality will be an important area for future work."

"It may be useful for parents to recognize that the online stories of others may not truly represent the reality of their day-to-day lives," said Sidani. "There is nothing wrong with reaching out to one's social circle for support around parenting. But balancing social media interactions with off-line connections may be useful."

Sidani, an SBM member, will present the findings Wednesday, March 6 during a paper session at the SBM Annual Meeting, being held in Washington, D.C., at the Washington Hilton. Additional authors on this research are Ariel Shensa, M.A., César G. Escobar-Viera, M.D., Ph.D., and Brian A. Primack, M.D., Ph.D., all of MTH at the University of Pittsburgh.

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### **About the University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences**

The University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences include the schools of Medicine, Nursing, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and the Graduate School of Public Health. The schools serve as the academic partner to the UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center). Together, their combined mission is to train tomorrow's health care specialists and biomedical scientists, engage in groundbreaking research that will advance understanding of the causes and treatments of disease and participate in the delivery of outstanding patient care. Since 1998, Pitt and its affiliated university faculty have ranked among the top 10 educational institutions in grant support from the National Institutes of Health. For additional information about the Schools of the Health Sciences, please visit [www.health.pitt.edu](http://www.health.pitt.edu).

### **Conference Program**

<https://www.sbm.org/UserFiles/file/am19-pro-v11.pdf>

### **About SBM**

The Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) is a 2,400-member organization of scientific researchers, clinicians and educators. They study interactions among behavior, biology and the environment, and translate findings into interventions that improve the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities ([www.sbm.org](http://www.sbm.org)).

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