

EDITORIAL**COVID-19 and Pregnancy: An Unwanted Combination**

Pregnant women are not at higher risk of contracting coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and pregnant individuals with COVID-19 are more likely than non-pregnant people of similar age to require intensive care unit admission or mechanical ventilation¹. COVID also leads to higher rates of death in pregnancy. Older age, high body mass index and pre-existing co-morbidities like hypertension and diabetes are associated with increased risks for more severe illness and death among pregnant people.

In this issue of journal of BCPS the paper “Maternal and Fetal Outcome of Pregnancy with COVID- 19” by AA Akhter et al. has found that 10% of the pregnant women required critical care. Neonatal death was 2% and at the same time 2% had congenital anomalies. These are few alarming data, which require further studies to confirm and update.

There is also higher risk of premature delivery and is associated with higher rates of fetal death before or during delivery. Data from the CDC indicate that from March 2020 to September 2021, the stillbirth rate was 273 of 21/ 653 deliveries (1.26%) among US women with COVID-19 compared with 7881 of 1/ 227/ 981 deliveries (0.64%) among women without COVID-19².

Pregnant women can be vaccinated and while there is less data available on vaccination of pregnant people³. There is no live vaccine in use, so there is no chance of developing COVID-19 from vaccination in pregnant women and fetuses. Moreover, ongoing monitoring of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy has shown no safety concerns so far and no adverse effects on fetal or post-natal development. COVID-19 vaccination is recommended before pregnancy and any time during pregnancy⁴. And any of the four currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines may be given to people who are pregnant.

Vaccinated people have been found to have antibodies against severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus type-2 (SARS-CoV-2) in their breast milk, which may help protect infants from infection⁵. Transmission of active SARS-CoV-2 virus through breast milk and breastfeeding has not been detected to date, so there is no reason to stop or avoid breast feeding.

COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for nursing mothers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that pregnant people should receive a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine also⁶.

As we have passed almost two years with COVID, it is now obvious that we have to live with it for next many years. The personal protective measures are the best weapon for self-defense which has to be supported by vaccination along with booster doses. Pregnancy increases the risk of severe disease many-fold and warrants extra-precaution from the outset.

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