



KNOWLEDGE ON ORAL HEALTH OF WOMEN DURING PREGNANCY

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KEYWORDS : Pregnancy, Oral health**INTRODUCTION:**

Pregnancy and postpartum are adequate periods for adopting a healthy lifestyle. Good practices include regular exercise, balanced diet, avoiding alcohol & smoking etc.

Medical care professionals provide educational & preventive interventions for maintaining a healthy lifestyle in pregnant and postpartum women. However, oral health conditions during pregnancy & post-natal period are not often considered by medical health professionals and as a result pregnant women are not sufficiently aware of them.

Aims & Objectives:

Pregnant women should receive up to date dental education to minimize the adverse outcomes of poor oral health in pre-natal & post-natal period.

Clinical evidence of poor oral health in the perinatal period has following associations:

- Risk of preterm delivery and low birth weight with periodontal disease and increased oral inflammation burden on pregnant women.
- Prevalence of oral mucosal disorder in pregnant women is very high and includes:
 - a) Gingival hyperplasia
 - b) Oral candidiasis
 - c) Benign migratory glossitis
 - d) Pyogenic granuloma
 - e) Epulis
- Reflux which is very common in the first trimester can lead to dental erosions, so appropriate preventive measures should also be recommended.

METHODS:

The study was designed as an observational, questionnaire-based cross sectional study; it complied the ethics and followed the standards of reporting.

The questionnaire was translated from English to Hindi and the subjects were asked to answer the questions in their preferred language.

After completing the questionnaire, the participants were contacted to find out if they had any difficulty in understanding the questions and proper assistance was provided.

A convenient Gynaecology and 2 Sonography centers were chosen for the study.

Inclusion criteria for enrollment of study were:

1. Signing informed consent
2. Be 18 years or older in age

Exclusion criteria:

1. Those who were not willing

The study was conducted over a period of 3 months, from December 2023 till February 2024.

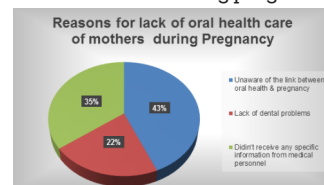
RESULT:

The questionnaire was answered by 863 subjects. About half of the subjects were aged between 26-32 years and most had only 1 child.

Only 32.8% of mothers reported that they had experienced oral health problems during pregnancy. 12.3% patients had visited a Dentist regularly before pregnancy.

Among the reasons of limited visits most common was lack of dental problems (21.5%)

Only 11.3% mothers knew that periodontal problems could affect the pregnancy outcomes & 43.5% had never heard of a possible link between oral health and pregnancy. Furthermore, the participants who stated that they were aware of a possible link between oral health & pregnancy only 38 reported that they had learnt it from their gynaecologist or dentist. 35% of the mothers reported never receiving any specific instruction on oral health during pregnancy.

**DISCUSSION:**

This survey aimed to assess whether the oral health knowledge & attitude of pregnant women were adequate to ensure a good level of oral health for them.

What emerged is a lack of dental care during pregnancy, a lack of information on oral health received from various medical personnel during and after pregnancy.

Correct hygiene habits are essential to keep the mouth healthy during this period of a woman's life as the inflammatory processes of oral cavity can also negatively the pregnancy outcomes.

Gynaecologists, as reported by the participants were unwilling to invest time & effort in patients' oral health leading to lack of information or a misconception that dental treatment during pregnancy would be unnecessary or dangerous.

A recent systematic review concluded that gynaecologists are aware of the importance of oral health during pregnancy but still fail to translate the knowledge to clinical practices.

CONCLUSION:

The result of this survey shares a lack of dental care during pregnancy, a lack of information on oral health received from medical personnel during & after pregnancy and consequently gaps in the knowledge needed to care for one's oral health.

This survey highlights how essential it is to promote oral health training courses for pregnant women by gynaecologists.