



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

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KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY AMONG ANTENATAL MOTHERS

KEY WORDS: Antenatal mothers, attitude, exercise in pregnancy, knowledge, practice

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Safe maternity with improved neonatal outcomes is predicated on proper antenatal health care services. Regular exercise is promoted for its overall health benefits.

Methodology: A total of 200 antenatal mothers were included in the study, who filled in the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of 25 questions (21 on knowledge, 3 on attitude and 1 on practice). Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results: Response rate was 100%. The age range of the study group was 18 - 35 years with a mean age of 25 ± 4.51 years. The majority of the study population were Hindus (81%), had undergone primary education (63%) and were homemakers (74%). The total mean knowledge score was 20.53 ± 2.08. 51% felt it was necessary to do exercise during pregnancy. 18% were practicing exercise in pregnancy.

Conclusion: The knowledge of our women on exercise during pregnancy was less than average, and their attitude was favorable. However a very few were actually practicing exercise in pregnancy.

INTRODUCTION

Antenatal care is a part of the public health promotion and prevention program in most countries. Safe maternity with improved neonatal outcomes is predicated on proper antenatal health care services, regular exercise is promoted for its overall health benefits.

Previous studies have found that being sedentary before the onset of pregnancy is a risk factor, not to start exercising when pregnant, confirming that women who are accustomed to exercising prior to pregnancy are more likely to maintain this habit and that those not physically active pre-pregnancy do not start during pregnancy. Hence, to achieve higher rates of exercise during pregnancy, health promotion programs should target the general female population in their child bearing years.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Department of obstetrics and gynecology, in Saveetha Medical College And Hospital, in Kanchipuram in India. Saveetha Hospital is a tertiary care hospital and catering health needs to the people of the that locality. The study population is a representation of the South Indian Women Population. All antenatal mothers attending our OPD for antenatal care and those who volunteered for the study were enrolled in the study. It was a cross-sectional descriptive study to analyze the knowledge, attitude and practice of exercise during pregnancy among antenatal mothers.

Participation to the study was on a voluntary basis. Data were collected using a self-administered pretested questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of 25 questions (21 on knowledge, 3 on attitude and 1 on practice). For knowledge items categorical responses (yes, I don't know, and no) were applied with an item score of '2', '1', '0' respectively for positive knowledge. For attitude and practice, the answers were either yes, no.

RESULTS:

The study involved a cohort of 100 antenatal mothers, and all completed the questionnaire. The response rate was 100%. The age range of the study group was 18 - 35 years with a mean age of 25 ± 4.51 years. The majority of the study population were Hindus (81%), had undergone primary education (63%) and were homemakers (74%). The sociodemographic characteristics of respondents are depicted in Table 1. The total mean knowledge score was

20.53 ± 2.08. The level of knowledge of antenatal exercises among the study population is presented in Tables 2 and 3. Considering the overall response of the antenatal mothers on antenatal exercises, their knowledge was less than average based on the mean knowledge score. 66% answered that they have heard about antenatal exercises. About 21% and 13% answered that they did not know or have not heard of antenatal exercises, respectively. Regarding the types of exercises awareness was better for variables such as breathing exercise, back exercise and abdominal exercise, viz., 54, 60 and 42% respectively. Awareness about other exercises like swimming, cycling and aerobics was poor. Values are shown in Table 2. When asked about the benefits of antenatal exercises the total mean knowledge score was 6.2 ± 2.1. The total mean knowledge score for contraindications was 8.6 ± 2.6. The details are shown in Table 3.

Issues relating to the attitude of respondents towards antenatal exercise are shown in Table 4. The results showed that 51% felt it was necessary to do exercise during pregnancy, and 35.2% among them have already done exercise in pregnancy. The main reason for doing exercise in pregnancy was the belief that exercise reduced ailments in pregnancy (76.5%), facilitates normal delivery (63.7%) and rapid postnatal recovery (56.8%). A major reason for those who felt that exercise in pregnancy was not necessary was feeling tired (69.4%), afraid of exercising (67.3%) and no sufficient information on antenatal exercise (71.4%). Details are shown in Table 4. The level of practice of exercise during pregnancy among our respondents was very less (18%).

Table 1: Socio Demographic Details Of The Respondents.

Variables	Participants
Religion	1
• Hindu	
• Muslim	6
• Christian	13
Education	63
• Primary	
• Secondary	28
• Tertiary	9
Occupation	74
• Home maker	
• Schooling	8
• Self employed	3
• Others	15

Table 2: Knowledge Of Respondents On Different Type Of Antenatal Exercises

Variables	Yes	I don't know	No
• Have you heard of antenatal exercises	66	21	13
• Breathing Exercises	54	20	36
• Back Exercises	60	15	25
• Abdominal Exercises	42	22	36

Table 3: Knowledge Of Respondents On Benefits And Contraindications Of Antenatal Exercises

Variables	Yes	I don't know	No
Benefits	55	16	29
• Exercise reduce risk of back pain during pregnancy			
• Prevents excessive weight gain in pregnancy	50	21	24
• Strengthens pelvic floor muscles in pregnancy	49	16	36
• Increases energy and stamina during pregnancy	43	18	39
• Better ability to cope with labor and delivery	50	15	25
• More rapid postnatal recovery	51	28	21
Contraindications	71	6	23
• Chest pain during pregnancy			
• Difficulty in breathing during pregnancy	67	8	25
• Abdominal pain during pregnancy	82	5	13
• Back pain during pregnancy	72	18	38
• Diabetes during pregnancy	68	12	20
• Uterine contractions during pregnancy	89	2	9
• Vaginal bleeding during pregnancy	92	8	0
• Premature labor during pregnancy	97	3	0

Table 4: Attitude Of Respondents Toward Antenatal Exercises

Variables	Participants
Exercise during pregnancy is necessary	51
If yes, why?	
• Reduces ailments during pregnancy	39
• Facilitates normal delivery	33
• Rapid postnatal recovery	29
If no, why?	49
• I feel tired to exercise	34
• I do not feel like exercising	17
• I have busy schedule	16
• I am afraid of exercise	33
• I do not have sufficient information on exercise	35
• I have a lot of child care activities	15

DISCUSSION

Our study population constituted respondents from a wide range of age group from 18 to 35 years giving a good representation of the population.

Considering the knowledge of respondents on the effect of exercise on pregnancy, nearly 50% believed that exercise reduces the risk of back pain and weight gain in pregnancy, increases the energy and stamina, helps to cope up with labor and fastens postnatal recovery. Though 50% were aware of the

benefits only 18% were actually practicing. The attitude of respondents toward the practice of exercise in pregnancy was mixed. Nearly 50% felt that the practice of exercise in pregnancy was necessary, for the reason that they believed exercise would reduce ailments in pregnancy, facilitate normal delivery and postnatal recovery. In our study the main reason for not exercising was feeling tired, insecurity and lack of information. This indirectly suggests that a wide group of respondents who feel that exercise is not necessary can easily be motivated by proper awareness programs.

The practice of simple and regular exercise in pregnancy will significantly improve physical wellbeing in pregnancy and good perinatal outcome. These benefits can easily be gained through simple interventions at community level, providing social support and providing a healthy lifestyle.

CONCLUSION:

The knowledge of our women on exercise during pregnancy was less than average, and their attitude was favorable. The main reason for poor knowledge was inadequate education. Very few were actually practicing exercise in pregnancy. The main attributable reason for the reduced practice was a lack of awareness on the merits and demerits of exercise in pregnancy.

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