

Female vets at risk of miscarriage from anesthetic gases and pesticides

April 3 2008

Female vets run twice the risk of miscarriage as a result of exposure to anaesthetic gases and pesticides, suggests a study published ahead of print in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

The findings prompt the authors to call for young female vets to be more clearly advised of the risks they run, should they want to become pregnant.

The study is based on a survey of women taking part in the Health Risks of Australian Veterinarians Project (HRAV).

This surveyed all those graduating from Australian veterinary schools between 1960 and 2000.

Of the 5700 graduates contacted, some 2800 responded, of whom 1200 were women.

Between them, these women reported a total of 1355 pregnancies, 940 of which occurred while working in clinical practice, and so were eligible for inclusion in the study.

Women carrying out surgery and exposed to anaesthetic gases that were not filtered out of the atmosphere, for an hour or more a week, were almost 2.5 times more likely to miscarry.

Female vets who used pesticides during the course of their work were

also twice as likely to miscarry.

And those who performed more than five x rays a week were around 80% more likely to miscarry than those performing fewer procedures.

When the researchers restricted their analyses to those women graduating more recently—between 1980 and 2000—the results were similar.

The authors warn that female vets of childbearing age “should be fully informed of the possible reproductive effects of ionising radiation, unscavenged anaesthetic gases, and exposure to pesticides.”

Women should take protective measures when they are planning to conceive and during pregnancy, they warn. But all staff working in these areas should be aware of the risks and protect themselves accordingly, they suggest.

Source: British Medical Journal

Citation: Female vets at risk of miscarriage from anesthetic gases and pesticides (2008, April 3) retrieved 23 April 2024 from

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