Study finds obesity during pregnancy is risk factor for long-term cardiovascular morbidity

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In a study to be presented on Feb. 7 at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine's annual meeting, The Pregnancy Meeting, in New Orleans, researchers will report that obesity during pregnancy is an independent risk factor for long-term cardiovascular morbidity, and these complications tend to occur at a younger age. Researchers concluded that obese pregnant patients might benefit from cardiovascular risk screening that could lead to early detection and secondary prevention of cardiovascular morbidity.

Obesity is considered a chronic disease with a dramatic increase in its prevalence worldwide during the last two decades. Close to one-third of women of childbearing age are classified as obese, and an additional 25 percent of women in this age group are classified as overweight. Maternal pre-pregnancy obesity is a significant risk factor for adverse obstetrical and perinatal outcomes.

The objective of this study, titled OBESITY IN PREGNANCY; WHAT'S NEXT? Long-term cardiovascular morbidity in a follow-up period of more than a decade was to investigate whether obesity in pregnancy is an independent risk factor for long-term subsequent maternal cardiovascular morbidity during a follow-up period of more than a decade.

Researchers evaluated data from pregnant women who delivered

between 1988 and 1999, and were followed-up retrospectively until 2010. Long-term cardiovascular morbidity was compared among women with and without obesity in pregnancy (defined as maternal pre-pregnancy body mass index of 30 kg/m2 or more). Cardiovascular morbidity was divided into four categories including simple and complex cardiovascular events and invasive and non-invasive cardiac procedures.

During the period of study, 46,688 women who delivered were recruited, and of that number, 1221 were found to suffer from obesity. Ten years later, these patients had higher rates of simple cardiovascular events, non-invasive diagnostic procedures, and total number of cardiovascular-related hospitalizations.

The data recovered not only indicates an association between obesity in pregnancy and future risk for cardiovascular morbidity, but also reveals the effect of obesity in pregnancy on earlier occurrence of cardiovascular morbidity.

Dr. Shimrit Yaniv Salem, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Faculty of Health Sciences, Soroka University Medical Center, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer sheva, Israel, said, "These results are of major importance to the obstetricians counseling a patient regarding future risk for cardiovascular complications. It is important for secondary prevention, early detection, and specific screening programs for this population. As obstetricians, we should remember to consult our obese patients not only for possible obstetrical issues but also for long-term cardiovascular complications. Pregnancy is a unique window of opportunity which has an important role in promoting life style modifications."

Provided by Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

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