

Women with high blood pressure during pregnancy face future of complications

January 29 2009

Chronic hypertension, diabetes and blood clots are more likely in otherwise healthy women who experienced complications due to hypertension such as preeclampsia in their first pregnancies, according to Yale School of Medicine researchers working in collaboration with the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

The findings are presented in an abstract at the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine Scientific meetings in San Diego, Calif., by lead author Jacob Alexander Lykke, M.D., of the University of Copenhagen. They show that women who have had two pregnancies complicated by preeclampsia are at an even higher risk of hypertension after pregnancy.

The investigators conducted a retrospective study of over 11 million women who gave birth in Denmark from 1978 to 2007. Of those women with preeclampsia, a complication of pregnancy linked to life-threatening cardiovascular disease, the risks of subsequent hypertension risks were compounded with each affected pregnancy.

"The only reliable treatment for preeclampsia is delivery of the baby," said senior author Michael J. Paidas, M.D., associate professor and director of the Program for Thrombosis and Hemostasis in Women's Health in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences at Yale. "But while delivery may 'cure' preeclampsia in the moment, these mothers are at high risk of chronic hypertension, type 2 diabetes mellitus and blood clots for the rest of their lives."

Paidas said the research adds to growing data on the link between hypertensive pregnancy disorders and subsequent death and ischemic heart disease. Paidas and the research team are conducting ongoing studies to explore the genetic links between pregnancy complications, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Source: Yale University

Citation: Women with high blood pressure during pregnancy face future of complications (2009, January 29) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-01-women-high-blood-pressure-pregnancy.html>

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