

Incidence of Cerebral Palsy on Rise in United States

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Cerebral palsy (CP) has increased in infants born prematurely in the United States, according to data presented by researchers from Loyola University Health System (LUHS). These findings were reported at the 30th Annual Meeting of the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine in Chicago. They also were published in the latest issue of the American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology.

Researchers reported that CP is associated with inflammation of the connective tissue in the umbilical cord. This inflammation is more common in premature births from preterm labor and premature rupturing of the amniotic sac versus early deliveries due to preeclampsia. Premature births from preterm labor and rupturing of the amniotic sac also are often associated with infections while preeclampsia is not.

“These findings are valuable, as we continue to study the link between premature births and [cerebral palsy](#),” said John Gianopolous, MD, chair, Mary Isabella Caestecker professor and chair, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, LUHS. “While further investigation is needed, managing inflammation may reduce the risk of certain complications in these infants.”

CP is a disorder that impairs movement due to brain damage. This condition typically develops by age 2 or 3. More than 500,000 Americans have CP, and it is one of the most common causes of chronic childhood disability.

Researchers evaluated 222 preterm placentas for this study. Reasons for premature births were categorized into four groups: premature rupture of the amniotic sac or preterm labor; preterm preeclampsia; maternal disease related to heart complications; and uncomplicated births of multiples. Of those patients who went into preterm labor or had their amniotic sac rupture early, 30 percent had an inflamed umbilical cord compared with only 3 percent of patients with preeclampsia.

LUHS maternal-fetal medicine specialists conducted this study. These physicians work in conjunction with neonatologists, geneticists and obstetrical anesthesiologists to provide care for patients with medical or surgical complications during pregnancy.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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