

Pregnancy riskline warns about Internet inaccuracies

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The Arizona Pregnancy Riskline, a service at the UA College of Pharmacy, warns about inaccurate information on the Internet in light of a recent study on the subject.

Using the Internet to make decisions about taking medications during

[pregnancy](#) or breastfeeding may lead to poor choices, the Arizona Pregnancy Riskline warns.

The riskline is a not-for-profit, telephone-based service at the University of Arizona College of Pharmacy with specially trained counselors who educate women and their health-care providers about potentially harmful exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Services are free and confidential.

Dee Quinn, a certified genetics counselor and director of the Arizona Pregnancy Riskline, says that while medication use during pregnancy and nursing is common and often safe, the Internet is not a solid source of reliable information for women making decisions about what prescription and over-the-counter medications present the least risk to their babies or themselves.

"An estimated 70 to 90 percent of all pregnant women use a prescription medication, and most of these women are very used to going to the Internet for information about nearly all aspects of their lives," Quinn said. "But a recent study looking at the reliability of websites that provide lists of medications reported to be safe showed both inconsistent and inaccurate information about those drugs."

Published in the Jan. 29 issue of the journal *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety*, the study evaluated 25 active Internet websites, comparing their lists of safe medications to risk assessments in TERIS (Teratogen Information System), an evidence-based system that uses the consensus of experts in the field.

For almost half of the medications listed on the sites, scientific databases were unable to provide a risk assessment because of limited published scientific data. Information was inconsistent among websites. Some of the sites did not contain information on dose and timing, which are

critical to determining whether the risk posed by a drug is greater or lesser than its benefits.

"Another concern in the study was that many of these websites did not encourage women to seek information and guidance from health-care providers," Quinn said. "Medication should not be stopped or started by a pregnant woman before discussing it with her doctor or other qualified healthcare provider."

Rather than rely solely on the internet, Quinn urges women to ask their doctors or contact the riskline with their questions about medications. The counselors at the Arizona Pregnancy Riskline are expert at identifying and interpreting evidence-based literature on potentially harmful exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding and with providing an individualized risk versus benefit analysis.

More information: onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pds.3410/abstract

Provided by University of Arizona

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