

Study reveals prevalence of women with heart disease delivering babies is increasing

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Human heart. Credit: copyright American Heart Association

A study of more than 80,000 women with heart disease from 2003 to 2012 reveals that the prevalence of women with heart disease delivering babies increased by 24 percent over that 10-year period. This jump, reported in a Stony Brook University-led study to be published May 15

in the *American Journal of Cardiology* , may prompt greater awareness of heart disease in women of childbearing age, heighten individual screening of heart disease in pregnant patients, and institute a multidisciplinary approach to labor and delivery.

Heart disease is the most common cause of death among pregnant [women](#) in the United States and other developed countries. There remain significant gaps in understanding of the prevalence, trends and outcomes of heart disease in pregnancy in the U.S. population. Investigation of trends and outcomes in heart disease and pregnancy has been limited.

In this study, researchers used the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project's National Inpatient Sample to better determine the trends and relationship between women with heart disease and delivering babies. To do this, they studied existing [heart conditions](#) and outcomes using a large sample of women with heart disease (81,295) and without heart disease (39,894,032).

"We learned that in addition to the high and growing prevalence of women with heart disease delivering babies, the reasons are mainly related to increases in women delivering babies with diseases such as cardiomyopathy, adult [congenital heart disease](#), and pulmonary hypertension," said lead author Kathleen Stergiopoulos, MD, PhD, Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, and a specialist in heart disease in women at the Stony Brook Heart Institute.

The study also showed that major adverse cardiac events in [pregnant women](#) with heart disease increased by nearly 19 percent, and there is a significant and gradual increase in these events for women who have delivered babies and have heart disease. The most common events for women with heart disease were heart failure and arrhythmia.

According to Dr. Stergiopoulos, while a maternal death is a rare event,

the findings should impact clinical practices when caring for women with heart disease who are pregnant.

She emphasized that future strategies to mitigate risk in these women include individualized preconception counseling and heart disease risk stratification, meticulous pregnancy follow-up, and a multi-disciplinary approach to labor and delivery that includes a coordinated approach to labor and delivery for those with [heart disease](#) that includes specialists from Cardiology, Maternal Fetal Medicine, Obstetrical Anesthesiology and Neonatology.

More information: Fabio V. Lima et al. National Trends and In-Hospital Outcomes in Pregnant Women With Heart Disease in the United States, *The American Journal of Cardiology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.amjcard.2017.02.003](#)

Provided by Stony Brook University

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