

Life-threatening complications during pregnancy: greater long-term risk of death

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A research team from the CHUM Research Centre (CRCHUM) has shown that women who have had serious complications during pregnancy are twice as likely to die up to three decades later.

Serious conditions such as stroke, [cardiac complications](#), [acute kidney](#)

[failure](#) and pre-eclampsia affect just under 5 % of [women](#) during pregnancy and childbirth.

In a study published in *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, CRCHUM researcher Dr. Nathalie Auger and postdoctoral fellow Ugochinyere Vivian Ukah examined the long-term mortality risks of women with these types of pregnancy complications by analyzing more than 1.2 million records of women who gave birth in Quebec between 1989 and 2016.

Their findings? Compared to women who had no serious pregnancy complications, women in the study were twice as likely to die after childbirth, either in the postpartum period (42 days and less) or afterwards. Although there was a decline over time, the greater risk of death was still felt several years after delivery, with death occurring an average of 8.3 years earlier for women with severe pregnancy complications compared with no complications.

The research team was also able to identify the main causes of mortality after 42 days: serious cardiac complications during pregnancy (7 times more likely to die), [acute renal failure](#) (4 times more likely), and strokes (4 times more likely).

From a clinical point of view, closer follow-up and preventive interventions to reduce the risk of premature mortality could be justified for women with severe [pregnancy](#) complications.

More information: U. Vivian Ukah et al, Severe Maternal Morbidity and Risk of Mortality Beyond the Postpartum Period, *Obstetrics & Gynecology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000004223](https://doi.org/10.1097/AOG.0000000000004223)

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