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Incidence of minor ailments of pregnancy among antenatal mothers visiting the out-patient department of a secondary care centre

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Abstract

In pregnancy, because of physiological, anatomical, biochemical and immunological changes, there are multiple minor ailments that affect the mother. Minor discomforts are reported by 50-80% of women in pregnancy. Nausea and vomiting, increased frequency of micturition and fatigue are commonly seen in early pregnancy. In the latter half of pregnancy, women have reported higher incidence of leg cramps, varicosities and pedal edema. Our study was undertaken to assess the incidence of various minor ailments in pregnancy. A total of 70 antenatal mothers in the third trimester of pregnancy were enrolled in the study after an informed consent and incidence of various ailments noted. Almost all of the women had nausea and vomiting in pregnancy, particularly in the first trimester. 77% reported leg cramps, 32% reported pica.

Keywords: minor ailments, pregnancy

Introduction

In pregnancy, many physiological, anatomical, biochemical and immunological changes and adaptations happen within the mother, which lead to minor discomforts^[1, 2]. The well being of antenatal mothers is affected by these minor ailments^[3].

NICE report in 2008 states that minor discomforts are reported by 50-80% of women in pregnancy^[4]. In the first trimester, nausea and vomiting, increased frequency of micturition and fatigue is seen which mostly diminish by second trimester. Heart burn, vaginal discharge, constipations are seen in second trimester and hemorrhoids, pedal edema, leg cramps and varicosities are seen in third trimester mostly^[3].

Nausea and vomiting are the most common symptoms affecting nearly 50-70% of pregnant women^[5]. Around 40% of pregnant women had varicosities in legs and vulva during pregnancy, mainly in second and third trimesters^[6]. Constipations is a again a very common ailment in pregnancy. 50-70% women report back pain at one point or other in pregnancy^[4]. Many women report having acid reflux during pregnancy as well. Also leg cramps, dysuria, pedal edema, skin changes are also reported during pregnancy^[7].

Home remedies and other non-pharmacological methods may be considered as the first line treatment but may eventually require medical management of these ailments^[8]. These minor ailments, affect the lives of the mothers and their fetuses. These minor ailments also lead to loss of productivity of the pregnant women^[9].

Successful management of these minor ailments requires adequate knowledge. Pregnant women can interpret these discomforts as pathological and it can lead to unnecessary hospital admissions causing a strain on the limited and finite resources^[2]. Healthcare providers should educated antenatal women on the differences between physiological and pathological ailments and their self management.

Method

It is a cross-sectional study conducted in the month of June 2021 and July 2021 at a civil hospital in Hamirpur district of Himachal Pradesh. The study consisted of 70 consecutive antenatal women in their third trimester of pregnancy after 34 completed weeks of gestation, who after an informed consent were given a pre-structured questionnaire and responses were noted. The women were asked about the commonly occurring minor ailments in pregnancy and their frequency noted in different trimesters.

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Results

Out of the 70 participants, 68.5% (48) were in the age group of 26-30 years of age. Youngest participant was 19 years of age and oldest was 34 years old. 65(93%) were multiparous women. All of the women were educated till higher secondary level. And 33 of them were graduates.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of study population

Characteristic	N	%
Age		
1. ≤19	1	1.4%
2. 20-25	13	18.5%
3. 26-30	48	68.5%
4. 31-35	9	12.8%
Parity		
1. Primigravida	5	7%
2. Multipara	65	93%
Level of education		
1. Higher secondary	30	42.8%
2. Graduate	33	47.1%
3. Post graduate	7	10%

The study population was asked about the minor discomforts that they experienced during their current pregnancy. 94.2% women had experienced nausea and vomiting, mainly in the early pregnancy. The incidence was high in primigravidas. 32.8% women reported pica, 12 women each had varicosities and hemorrhoids. 77% women had leg cramps mainly in the late pregnancy, and 44.2% had reported heart burn.

Table 2: reported minor ailments in current pregnancy

Minor discomfort reported	N	%
Nausea and vomiting	66	94.2%
Pica	23	32.8%
Constipation	18	25.7%
Heart burn	31	44.2%
Hemorrhoids	12	17.1%
Leg cramps	54	77.1%
Varicosities	12	17.1%
Pedal edema	43	61.4%
Urinary frequency	59	84.2%

Discussion

During pregnancy, women undergo a lot of physical and hormonal changes, which cause minor discomforts and ailments. These ailments are not life-threatening but cause significant discomfort to the patient and her family^[10]. These ailments are a major reason for decreased professional efficacy during pregnancy as well.

Only one woman was <19 years of age. Teenage pregnancies and pregnancy in women older than 40 years of age is high risk pregnancy, since women have an age window when it is easier for their bodies to bear the strain of pregnancy and child birth. All most all mothers had nausea and vomiting (94.2%) which is similar to the study by Samarakoon SKSN *et al.*^[11]. 84% women experienced urinary frequency which is considerable higher than other studies, it may be because of less hygienic practices in rural areas leading to increased chances of urinary tract infections. 77% women experienced leg cramps which is again higher than other studies and is probably because of the dietary habits, which consist of mainly vegetarian diet. 23 women had pica, it is because of the increased incidence of iron deficiency anemia among north Indian women, again because of predominantly vegetarian diet. Only 17% women reported

having hemorrhoids and varicosities and all of them were working long hours.

In summary, almost all antenatal women have experienced nausea and vomiting during pregnancy. Heartburn was also less common after first trimester. Women experienced constipation and pedal edema more frequently in third trimester.

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