



Utilization of Self-Medication, Prescription Medication and Herbal Remedies During Pregnancy in Punjab, Pakistan

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SUMMARY. Drug safety is of the highest priority in the treatment of pregnant women, as any effect on the developing fetus will not be immediately evident and the resulting harm could be fatal. The study aimed to assess the use of over-the-counter drugs (OTC), prescription only medicines (POM) and herbal therapies by pregnant women in Punjab, Pakistan. A multicenter study was conducted among pregnant women (N = 205) from tertiary care hospitals such as Hilal-e-Ahmer Hospital Faisalabad, Children Hospital Multan and many other private hospitals in Punjab, Pakistan over a period of approximately 14 weeks. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data. The data was interpreted using chi square test. We observed that 79% of women were took OTC drugs during pregnancy, including nonsteroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or antacids. Over 90% of women were prescribed POM and most of them fell into FDA classification category C (n = 88) and B (n = 85). About 49.2% of women had consumed one or two herbs in their pregnancy. The main reasons leading to the use of herbs were constipation (17.08%), upset stomach (5.85%), cold/flu (5.36%), healthy development of the fetus (4.39%) and induction of labor (3.41%). Statistically significant results appeared in two variable namely education (p = 0.02) and number of previous pregnancies (p = 0.038). Highly educated women or women who have had at least one pregnancy are better informed about the harmful effects of using medication during pregnancy.

RESUMEN. La seguridad de los medicamentos es de máxima prioridad en el tratamiento de mujeres embarazadas, ya que cualquier efecto sobre el feto en desarrollo no será inmediatamente evidente y el daño resultante podría ser fatal. El estudio tuvo como objetivo evaluar el uso de medicamentos de venta libre (OTC), medicamentos de venta con receta (POM) y terapias a base de hierbas por parte de mujeres embarazadas en Punjab, Pakistán. Se realizó un estudio multicéntrico entre mujeres embarazadas (N = 205) de hospitales de atención terciaria como el Hospital Hilal-e-Ahmer Faisalabad, el Hospital Infantil Multan y muchos otros hospitales privados en Punjab, Pakistán, durante un período de aproximadamente 14 semanas. Se utilizó un cuestionario de desarrollo propio para recopilar datos. Los datos se interpretaron mediante la prueba de chi cuadrado. Observamos que el 79% de las mujeres tomaban medicamentos de venta libre durante el embarazo, incluidos antiinflamatorios no esteroides (AINE) o antiácidos. A más del 90% de las mujeres se les prescribió POM y la mayoría de ellas se incluyeron en la categoría C (n = 88) y B (n = 85) de la clasificación de la FDA. Aproximadamente el 49,2% de las mujeres habían consumido una o dos hierbas durante el embarazo. Las principales razones que llevaron al uso de hierbas fueron estreñimiento (17.08%), malestar estomacal (5.85%), resfriado/gripe (5.36%), desarrollo saludable del feto (4.39%) e inducción del parto (3.41%). Aparecieron resultados estadísticamente significativos en dos variables, a saber, educación (p = 0,02) y número de embarazos previos (p = 0,038). Las mujeres con un alto nivel educativo o las mujeres que han tenido al menos un embarazo están mejor informadas sobre los efectos nocivos del uso de medicamentos durante el embarazo.

KEY WORDS: herbal remedies, pregnancy, prescription medication, self-medication.

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