

Improving pregnancy outcomes and women's health in general

This issue of the journal contains fourteen articles covering various aspects of Medicine - both clinical and basic sciences of which five focus on women issues. The first is a review of gynaecological cancer care which highlighted the impact of poverty, lack of access to health care, inadequate or absence of basic infrastructure as the main hinderances to optimal care while delay in presentation contributed to the overall poor prognosis. The second article advocates the adoption of home-based post-natal care by trained health practitioners between the period of birth and forty-two days for improving maternal and family health. According to the authors, this method has been adopted by many countries for lowering maternal mortality and providing holistic care for women and their newborn babies.

Hypertension is referred to as a silent killer because of the damage it causes while the individual is still asymptomatic. It is the most important risk factor for chronic cardiovascular diseases – damaging the heart, brain, kidneys, eyes and blood vessels in general. When it affects women, the consequences are grave. The third article reported that about 7% of pregnant women studied had hypertension. Pre-eclampsia and eclampsia predominated followed by gestational hypertension. Women aged 31 years and over as well as those with previous history of hypertension constitute the group that should be closely monitored in pregnancy to avoid preventable complications. They should indeed be regarded as “high risk pregnancies”. The fourth paper was based on a study of iodine levels in pregnant women in their first trimester. Low iodine levels (measured in the urine) and thyroid hormone levels were found in less than 10% of the participants showing that iodine deficiency was uncommon. Nutritional supplementation of iodine was adequate, and the finding would justify why cretinism is relatively uncommon. The fifth article was based on observations in laboratory animals and the finding can be extrapolated to human beings. Watermelon (*Citrilus lanatus*) was shown to have anti-oxidative properties and that its consumption can reduce craving for sugar as well as result in healthy placental development. This may have a place in managing gestational diabetes.

Although the topics covered are varied, the overall conclusion is that maternal health can be improved upon by using the findings from these studies. The other nine articles in the issue are no less interesting and challenging. Collaboration between basic and clinical sciences is essential for making significant contributions in Medicine. The time has indeed come to emphasize the importance of translational research so that research findings can bring about the much-needed improvement in health with better indices for international comparisons.

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