

Pregnant women and risk factors: a cross-sectional study

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Background:

Many investigations have shown the important role played by risk factors such as tobacco and alcohol in the development of congenital anomalies.

Methods:

Through the administration of an hoc questionnaire, we evaluated the attitude towards smoking and alcohol of a sample of 200 pregnant women at the University Hospital of Messina. The questionnaire was structured to collect information about socio-demographic characteristics, type of gynaecological assistance and their lifestyles (smoking and alcohol). Statistical analysis was performed using version 10 of StatSoftVR software.

Results:

14% of the women continued to smoke despite pregnancy; the majority of these were young adults, divorced, employed and with a high educational level. Correlating the smoking habit with the socio-demographic characteristics of the studied women, we found a statistically significant difference for the marital status, with a higher number of smokers among the single women ($p < 0.05$). Moreover, we found a statistically significant difference also for the profession with a higher number of smokers in the worker women ($p < 0.05$). About the drinking habit, the 4.3% declared to be moderate drinkers (occasional use of alcohol equal to 2-3 glasses a week) despite pregnancy, the 34.4% stated they do not drink alcohol during pregnancy and the 56% stated do not usually drink alcohol. Particularly, about the drinkers' socio-demographic characteristics, the 50% of them were 24-25 years old and the 75% were married. About the type of alcoholic beverages consumed, 86% stated they usually drink beer during the weekend.

Conclusions:

Our study shows that the awareness of the women about the importance of these risk factors is still rather poor. In order to improve the awareness of pregnant women on the importance of avoiding these risk factors and prevent CAs, health education campaigns at various levels surely represent the public health cornerstone.

Key messages:

- In our sample 14% of the pregnant women continued to smoke and 4.3% to drink despite pregnancy and they generally were young or young adults and with a high educational level.
- Our results highlight the importance of continuous health education about the risk to smoke and drink during pregnancy.