Question:

In the pregnant patient population how does alcohol consumption, when compared with no alcohol consumption, affect the fetus' risk of developing fetal alcohol spectrum disorder?

Response:

There are many recognized risks to consuming alcohol while pregnant and yet many expecting mothers have consumed or continue to consume alcohol despite the risk of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs). These Disorders can include but are not limited to, "birth defects that involve central nervous system impairment, behavioral disorders, impaired intellectual development, which can lead to difficulties with school and employment … Drinking during pregnancy might also be a risk factor for other adverse pregnancy and birth outcomes, including miscarriage and stillbirth" (Denny et al., 2019). Alcohol consumption during pregnancy, therefore, not only puts the fetus at risk but the mother as well. As many as, "Half of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended,[10] so a fetus may be exposed to alcohol in utero at important times in embryologic development even before a woman knows that she is pregnant. Alcohol use during pregnancy is a leading, preventable cause of birth defects and developmental disabilities in the United States, with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) being one of the most severe outcomes" (Dejong et al., 2019). As stated by Dejong et. al, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders are completely preventable by abstaining from alcohol consumption. As later stated, "In 2005, Surgeon General Richard Carmona recommended abstinence from alcohol for pregnant women and women who may become pregnant to eliminate the risk of giving birth to an infant affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). This recommendation was made in the setting of no known safe amount of alcohol in pregnancy. If a woman had already consumed alcohol in pregnancy, the recommendation was to stop to minimize further risk" (Dejong et al., 2019). A large issue with FASDs is that they are likely underreported. As a new strategy to "reduce this stigma that can negatively impact the patient, birth mother, and family members, we should explore the use of an alternative diagnostic term for FASD that does not specify fetal alcohol exposure**.** An alternative term could minimize barriers to women's self-report of alcohol consumption during pregnancy and, therefore, lead to more determination of prenatal alcohol exposure, which could then result in earlier diagnosis and intervention (Popova et al., 2020). Alcohol plays a large role in society and relationships, but it has been recommended that expectant mothers or anyone who could possibly be pregnant abstain from consuming alcohol due to the known risks and unknown safe level of alcohol for a growing fetus.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, alcohol consumption greatly increases the risk of the pregnant population developing fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. There has never been a known safe level of alcohol for pregnant patients to consume, but abstinence has always been known to prevent fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. Therefore, "the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

defines at-risk alcohol use [as] any amount of drinking for women who are pregnant or at risk of pregnancy" (Dejong et al., 2019). Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders can influence a child's life well past birth, as they affect development of intelligence, behavior, and the physical body (Denny et al., 2019). Consumption of any amount of alcohol during pregnancy may continue to have effects in both the patient's and child's lives for years to come.

Work Cited:

Primary Article

Dejong, K., Olyaei, A., & Lo, J. O. (2019, March). Alcohol use in pregnancy. *Clinical obstetrics and gynecology.* Retrieved February 5, 2023, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7061927/

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Denny, C. H., Acero, C. S., Naimi, T. S., & Kim, S. Y. (2019, April 26). Consumption of alcohol beverages and binge drinking among pregnant women aged 18-44 years - United States, 2015-2017. *MMWR. Morbidity and mortality weekly report*. Retrieved February 5, 2023, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6483284/

Tertiary Article

Popova, S., Dozet, D., & Burd, L. (2020, April). Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Can we change the future? *Alcoholism, clinical and experimental research*. Retrieved February 5, 2023, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7217166/