Severe COVID-19 During Pregnancy Associated With Preterm Birth, Other Complications

But new data add to the evidence that mother-to-infant transmission of the coronavirus appears to be rare.

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Pregnant women who experienced severe symptoms of COVID-19 had a higher risk of complications during and after pregnancy, according to preliminary findings from a National Institutes of Health study. Compared to COVID-19 patients without symptoms, those with severe symptoms were at higher risk for cesarean delivery, postpartum hemorrhage, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy and preterm birth.

The study was led by Torri Metz, MD, of University of Utah Health, Salt Lake City, and Rebecca Clifton, PhD, of the Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University, Washington, D.C. An abstract of the study will be presented today [January 28, 2021] at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine's virtual annual meeting.

The findings come from the Gestational Research Assessments for COVID-19 (GRAVID) study conducted by investigators in the Maternal-Fetal Medicine Units (MFMU) Network, a group of U.S. clinical centers funded by NIH's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

Researchers evaluated more than 1,200 pregnant women with COVID-19 who delivered at 33 U.S. hospitals between March 1 and July 30, 2020. Roughly half of the women (47%) were asymptomatic, 27% had mild symptoms, 14% had moderate symptoms, 8% had severe symptoms and 4% were critically ill. Those with more severe symptoms tended to be older, with a higher than average body mass index and underlying health issues, such as asthma, diabetes, hypertension, liver disease and seizure disorder.

Researchers attributed four maternal deaths to COVID-19. Transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, from mother to child was rare, with 1% of newborns testing positive for the virus before discharge from the hospital.

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