

The Knowledge and Experiences of Pregnant Women Regarding Physical Activity during Pregnancy

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Abstract : Introduction Adequate physical activity of a pregnant woman has been proven to decrease the risk of pregnancy complications. The knowledge of women regarding physical exercise in pregnancy is a part of conscious motherhood, while a lack of it may lead to not taking up any form of physical activity during pregnancy. Aim: The aim of the study was to assess the knowledge and experience of women regarding physical activity during their latest pregnancy. Material and methodology: An anonymous questionnaire, consisting of 57 questions, was completed electronically in 2018 by women who gave birth at least once. The respondents were qualified as 'physically active during pregnancy' if they performed physical exercises such as regular walks, marching, jogging, working out at a gym, swimming, yoga, pilates, fitness, exercise-ball workouts or home gymnastics. Results: The study group consisted of 9345 women. 52% of them performed exercises during pregnancy. The main reasons for the lack of physical activity were: lack of interest in physical activity (45%), lack of energy (40%), lack of knowledge regarding proper exercise during pregnancy (34%), lack of time (27%) and medical contraindications (25%). Non-active respondents suffered from gestational hypertension (6,7% vs 9,2%; $p < 0,001$) and gave birth prematurely (11% vs 15%; $p < 0,001$) to newborns with a lower birth weight significantly more often ($< 2500g$ vs $> 2500g$; $p < 0,001$). Physically active women reported suffering from pregnancy-related ailments such as fatigue, back pain or constipation significantly less often. 22% of all respondents were unable to identify reliable sources of information regarding exercise during pregnancy. A majority of the exercising women used the Internet to obtain gain information on physical activity during pregnancy (69,1%). 4% of women thought that exercising during pregnancy is forbidden, while 20% thought it is not allowed in the 3rd trimester. Physically active women had vaginal delivery more often (61% vs 55%; $p < 0,05$). Episiotomy was performed most often on non-active primiparous respondents (77,5% vs 71% active primiparous, $p < 0,001$). 13% of women felt discriminated due to their physical activity during pregnancy. 22% of respondents' physical activity was not accepted by their environment. 39,1% of the women were told by others to stop physical exercise because it was bad for the baby's health. Conclusion: The knowledge of Polish women regarding proper physical activity during pregnancy is insufficient, which may influence a lack of will to initiate such activity among pregnant women. Physical activity of a pregnant woman may have an impact on the course of pregnancy and birth.

Keywords : childbirth, discrimination, physical activity, pregnancy

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