

Risk perception by healthcare professionals related to drug use during pregnancy: a Swiss survey

Chantal Csajka¹, Aurélie Jaquet¹, Ursula Winterfeld², Yvonne Meyer³, Adrienne Einarson⁴, Alice Panchaud^{1,2}

¹*School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Geneva and Lausanne, Geneva, Switzerland*

²*Swiss Teratogen Information Service, Division of clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology, University Hospital Centre and University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland*

³*School of Health Sciences– Midwifery section, Lausanne, Switzerland*

⁴*The Motherisk Program, the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Canada*

Abstract

Principle: Health care professionals (HCPs) perception of risk associated with drug use in pregnancy may have an impact on the pharmacological treatment of some women. The aim of this study was to examine this risk perception in a sample of Swiss health care professionals with a special focus on their knowledge and use of available specialized information sources.

Method: An online, French and German, questionnaire was emailed to 7136 members of four Swiss professional societies (gynecologists, pediatricians, midwives and, pharmacists). The questionnaire was designed (a) to collect demographic characteristics, (b) to evaluate the frequency of use of several specialised sources of information on drugs in pregnancy in their daily practice and, (c) to examine the perception of risk associated with drug use during pregnancy.

Results: A total of 1310 questionnaires were collected (response rate of 18.4%). More than 80% of the respondent HCPs use the Swiss Drug Reference Book (Compendium) to assess the risk associated with drugs during pregnancy and are not aware of available specialized information sources (books, websites or information centers). Despite some disparities between health care professionals, the risk related to drug intake was overall highly misperceived. Blinded reading of three product monographs in the Compendium was associated with an overestimated perception of risk (e.g. after reading “paracetamol” monograph, 38% of the participants stated they would probably not advise the use of this drug to a pregnant patient).

Conclusion: Overall, an overestimation of the risk associated with drug use during pregnancy has been observed in our sample of HCPs that might be related to the underuse of specialized information source among other factors. These findings evidenced the need for increased training for HCPs in order to optimize medication use during pregnancy. Further studies are needed to confirm these results and identify causes.