

Antenatal care for women who experience imprisonment in Ontario, Canada

New research reveals that women incarcerated in Ontario are less likely to receive prenatal care that meets international standards.

A team of researchers from McMaster University (Departments of Family Medicine and Obstetrics & Gynecology), the University of British Columbia, and ICES compared prenatal care indicators for women with experience of incarceration and women in the general population during pregnancies between 2005 and 2015. In contrast with the general population group, women who were incarcerated for any period of time during pregnancy and women who had *ever* experienced incarceration were less likely to have received care that met international standards.

VISIT FREQUENCY:

- During pregnancy, regular prenatal care visits provide important opportunities for healthcare providers to monitor parental and foetal wellbeing, and to develop positive rapport with patients.
- Only 48% of women who were imprisoned during pregnancy, and 59% of ever-incarcerated women received the recommended eight or more prenatal visits over the course of their pregnancy, in contrast with 85% of pregnant women in the general population.

FIRST TRIMESTER ANTENATAL CARE:

- In the first trimester, antenatal visits with a healthcare provider facilitate screening and treatment for a variety of serious parental and foetal health conditions with significant health implications.
- In comparison with 80% of pregnant women in the general population, just 38% of women who were imprisoned during pregnancy, and 48% of ever incarcerated women, had antenatal care visits during their first trimester.

ULTRASOUND:

- In the first trimester, a dating ultrasound provides parents and healthcare providers with the most accurate information possible related to how far along a pregnancy has progressed.
- Only 35% of women who experienced incarceration had a prenatal ultrasound in their first trimester of pregnancy, compared with 55% of women in the general population.

Antenatal care plays a critically important role in supporting the health of women and children. This study found that a substantial proportion of women who experience imprisonment miss out on this care, providing new context for previous research indicating that women who are incarcerated – including those who are pregnant – have poorer health outcomes than those in the population at large.

Read the full article:

Carter Ramirez A, Liauw J, Cavanagh A, Costecu D, Holder L, Lu H, Kouyoumdjian FG. [Quality of antenatal care for women who experience imprisonment in Ontario, Canada](#). JAMA Network Open 2020; 3(8):e2012576.