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Poster Presentations

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What are antenatal care needs of women who conceived through assisted reproductive technologies? A mixed methods literature review

Warmelink JC^{1,2}.

1. Department of Midwifery Science, Amsterdam Public Health Research Institute, University of Amsterdam and University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands.

2. Department of General Practice and Elderly Medicine, Section Midwifery Science, Academy Midwifery Amsterdam and Groningen, Amsterdam, Groningen, The Netherlands.

Email: catja.warmelink@inholland.nl

Background: Nearly 5% of newborns in Europe are nowadays born following assisted reproductive technologies (ART), a steadily increasing number. Women who conceived through ART might experience more stress and anxiety during pregnancy compared to women who conceived spontaneously, and their mother-infant attachment might be delayed. Therefore, ART-women might have additional antenatal care needs.

Objective: To provide an updated review of the available evidence on the antenatal care needs of women who conceived through ART.

Materials and Methods: By means of a mixed methods literature review, we systematically searched for literature to identify journal articles published till May 2019 in five databases. The following medical subject headings terms were used: "Pregnancy", "Pregnant women", "Reproductive techniques",

"Assisted, Prenatal care", "Qualitative research" and "Midwifery". After evaluating 876 abstracts, 33 eligible studies were assessed for methodological quality appraisal using the Mixed Methods Appraising Tool. 11 articles were included in this study: 6 qualitative studies and 5 quantitative studies.

Results: Analysis of the included studies resulted into four themes: 'General health', 'Anxiety', 'Maternal-fetal attachment' and 'The experience of pregnancy after fertility treatment'. ART-women reported lower social and physical functioning scores and elevated levels of anxiety compared to women who conceived spontaneously. The results concerning mother-infant attachment in relation to method of conception were inconclusive. ART-women reported difficulties adjusting to pregnancy and experienced paradoxical feelings regarding their pregnancies. Moreover, they want maternity caregivers to pay more attention to their history, more psychosocial support, routine check-ups and ultrasounds. Lastly, women who are transferred from the fertility clinic to local maternity services may experience a care gap between discharge from the clinic and having their first appointment or ultrasound at the local maternity services.

Conclusion: The results of our study indicate that women who conceived through ART could indeed have additional antenatal care needs. Most importantly, ART-women want their occasionally conflicting feelings to be acknowledged by caregivers. Therefore, caregivers should invite these women to talk about their history and to express their care needs in order to individualize their care plan.

Key words: ART, Pregnancy, Midwifery.