Objectives Miscarriage is a prevalent adverse pregnancy outcome that has been linked to ergonomic risk factors at work in numerous studies but no scientific consensus has emerged. In order to improve the impact of occupational health counselling of pregnant women the objective of this study was to quantify the risk of miscarriage according to prevalent work activities and to discuss causal inference based upon all available scientific data.

Methods A search in Medline and EMBASE 1966 - 2012 identified 29 primary papers reporting the relative risk (RR) of miscarriage according to work at night, long working hours, heavy lifting or prolonged standing. Following an assessment of completeness of reporting, confounding and bias, each risk estimate was characterised as more or less likely to be biased. Studies with equivalent measures of exposure were pooled to obtain a weighted common risk estimate. Sensitivity analyses excluded studies most likely to be biased.

Results Working fixed nights was associated with a moderately increased risk of miscarriage [pooled RR 1.51 (95% CI 1.27–1.78, n = 5)], while working for more than 40–52 hours weekly, lifting>100 kg/day and standing > 6–8 hours/day were associated with small risk increments: the pooled RRs ranging from 1.16 (prolonged standing, number of risk estimates 6) to 1.33 (working hours, number of risk estimates 9). Most RRs tended to become smaller and statistically non-significant when analyses were restricted to higher quality studies.

Conclusions These largely reassuring findings do not provide a case for mandatory restrictions in relation to working fixed night shifts, long working hours, occupational lifting and prolonged standing. Considering the limited evidence base, however, it seems prudent to advise women against work entailing high levels of these exposures.

Abstracts

Session: Plenary session RICOH: Introduction and work activities

212 WORK ACTIVITIES AND ADVERSE PREGNANCY OUTCOMES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

M Bonzini, T P Palmer, C E H Harris, C L Linaker, P B Bonde. Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine Research Centre, University of Insulbia, Varese, Italy; MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit, University of Southampton, Southampton, United Kingdom; Department of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Objectives To assess the relation between five common occupational exposures (working hours, shift work, lifting, standing, workload) and five adverse outcomes of pregnancy (pre-term delivery (PTD), low birthweight, small for gestational age (SGA), pre-eclampsia, gestational hypertension).

Methods We conducted a search in MEDLINE and EMBASE (1966–2011) using combinations of keywords and MeSH terms. Reports were assessed for their reporting and potential for bias and confounding. Meta-estimates of relative risk (RR) were produced where possible. The material comprised 86 reports (57 reports with usable data on PTD, 54 on birthweight and 11 on pre-eclampsia/gestational hypertension).

Results For PTD, findings across a large evidence base were consistent in ruling out large effects (e.g. RR<1.2). Larger and better quality studies were even less positive (RR 1.04 to 1.18). For SGA, the position was similar but meta-estimates were close to the null. For pre-eclampsia/gestational hypertension the evidence base was insufficient to draw strong conclusions.

Conclusions The balance of evidence is not compelling enough to justify mandatory restrictions on any of the activities considered in this review. Over time, estimates of risk for these activities and outcomes have become smaller.

213 RISK OF MISCARRIAGE IN RELATION TO WORK AT NIGHT, WORK HOURS, LIFTING AND STANDING: A META-ANALYSIS

P B Bonde, J Jørgensen, Bonzini, P Palmer. Bispebjerg Hospital, Copenhagen, Denmark; Bispebjerg Hospital, Copenhagen University, Copenhagen, Denmark; Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine Research Centre, Department of Clinical and, Varese, Italy; MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit, University of Southampton, Southampton General, Southampton, United Kingdom.

Objectives Miscarriage is a prevalent adverse pregnancy outcome that has been linked to ergonomic risk factors at work in numerous studies but no scientific consensus has emerged. In order to improve the impact of occupational health counselling of pregnant women the objective of this study was to quantify the risk of miscarriage according to prevalent work activities and to discuss causal inference based upon all available scientific data.

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Conclusions These largely reassuring findings do not provide a case for mandatory restrictions in relation to working fixed night shifts, long working hours, occupational lifting and prolonged standing. Considering the limited evidence base, however, it seems prudent to advise women against work entailing high levels of these exposures.
Results We observed 2,726 pregnancy losses in a cohort of 68,096 pregnant women. We found no consistent associations between increased heavy lifting and pregnancy losses up to gestational week 21. However, for fetal death occurring after week 21 we found an increased risk among women lifting more than 200 kg/day (Hazard Ratio (HR) = 1.55; 95% Confidence Interval (CI): 1.03–2.35) compared to non-lifting women. After controlling for potential confounders, the result for stillbirths became insignificant, but the estimate did not change much (HR = 1.40; 95%CI: 0.92–2.14).

Conclusion The study corroborates earlier findings in the Danish National Birth Cohort that occupational lifting is related to an increased risk for fetal death. Due to the prospective design with late enrollment into the study, ascertainment of early miscarriage is incomplete and therefore the study does not provide strong evidence on risk for early miscarriage.

Objective The question remains unresolved if the risk of preterm birth increases with increasing occupational lifting. Previous studies have generally used individual-based exposure assessment relying on self-report, and based on this approach, we have observed an exposure-response relation between total load lifted per day and preterm birth. To corroborate our finding, we aimed to examine the risk of preterm birth among primigravidas in relation to occupational lifting during pregnancy using group-based exposure assessment.

Methods Within the Danish National Birth Cohort (DNBC), we identified 24,833 occupationally active primigravidas with singleton pregnancies, who as a minimum entered gestational week 23 and provided interview data while pregnant. We constructed a Job Exposure Matrix (JEM) based on information from all women in the DNBC, who were pregnant when interviewed. The JEM cross-tabulated job and industry information with average total loads lifted per day. Each woman received an exposure estimate from the JEM. We used Cox regression analysis adjusting for age, smoking, BMI, and alcohol consumption. The women were followed from start of week 23 or interview date, whichever came last, until end of week 37 or pregnancy termination, whichever came first.

Results A total of 1601 preterm births occurred. Adjusted HRs increased with increasing occupational lifting, reaching a HR of 1.42 (95% CI 1.13–1.77) for women in the highest exposure category (≥200 kg per day), when compared to non-lifters.

Conclusion We used group-based exposure assessment to minimize information bias and attenuation of exposure-response relations. Among women in jobs categorized with a lifting exposure of >200 kg per day, we found support for a moderately increased risk of preterm birth.

REFERENCE