

A cross-sectional study on medications used by pregnant women: any safety concern?

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Background: Medication use during pregnancy is widespread and should be considered as a public health concern. This study was conducted to determine the types and safety of medications used by pregnant women.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted on pregnant women who attended the antenatal clinic of a major teaching hospital in Kuala Lumpur. Data was collected via face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire from January to April 2013.

Results: Of the 500 respondents, 62% (95% confidence interval, CI: 57.7%, 66.3%) used at least one medication during their pregnancy while 30.8% (95% CI: 26.8%, 34.8%) took the medications during the first trimester. The classes of medications commonly used by the pregnant respondents were analgesics (26.8% of the respondents), followed by cough and cold medications (18.6%) and medications for gastrointestinal disorders (11.8%). Among the 697 medications used by the respondents during pregnancy, 0.1% was classified under pregnancy safety category A, 51.8% were under category B, 14.3% were under category C, 0.7% under category D and 0.1% under category X. In addition, eight potentially teratogenic medications were used by the pregnant women in this study.

Conclusion: The findings of this study show that potentially teratogenic medications were used by pregnant women. This calls for healthcare providers to be more vigilant in educating pregnant women on the safe use of medications.

Keywords: pregnancy, safety, medications, first trimester, teratogenic