Vitamin D Deficiency in Pregnancy

SSEP Update

(Sweet Success Extension Program)

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If you have attended any one of our seven (7) conferences during 2013, you should have seen the familiar logo that appears to the left - Novo Nordisk, Inc. - who has supported every single event with an educational grant. We sincerely appreciate their generosity, which may have kept SSEP alive during a very difficult year. We are most grateful for their faith in, and support of our work.

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SSEP received substantial educational grants from the **COMMUNITY BENEFITS** PROGRAM at The Mary & Dick Allen Diabetes Center at HOAG HOSPITAL in Newport Beach, CA in 2013. They hosted the Advanced Diabetes in Pregnancy Management Conference in July, covering some major expenses. They also provided a substantial educational grant to support the Annual Sweet Success Express Conference in November. SSEP/SSE are grateful for their continued support of our events and projects.

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SSEP Update GOAL is to publish useful information and/or tools to help team members provide quality diabetes and pregnancy care.

SSEP Mission: Our mission is to improve pregnancy outcomes and long-term quality of life for women with diabetes and their offspring, which extends beyond birth for both mother and child. We work with provider groups to increase their knowledge and delivery of care by:

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Vitamin D Deficiency in Pregnancy By: Lily Nichols, RD

We can all agree that adequate nutrient intake is of paramount importance in pregnancy. As healthcare practitioners, we are familiar with the role of vitamin D on bone metabolism, but an increasing number of studies are looking into its impact on other maternal and fetal outcomes. Vitamin D deficiency is a global health concern, particularly in pregnant women. Studies estimate the prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in pregnant women worldwide to range between 20-85% with rates of deficiency reaching 98% in some areas (1,2). Women with darker skin are at a 6-fold higher risk for deficiency, in part due to melanin in skin inhibiting vitamin D production from sun exposure (1). Other factors that contribute to vitamin D deficiency are inadequate sun exposure, avoidance of sun during mid-day, inability to produce vitamin D from the sun in the winter in regions far from the equator (>33 degrees North or South), use of sunscreen, and protective clothing. In addition, food sources of the vitamin are scarce and primarily found in fatty animal foods, such as fish and egg yolks, or fortified foods (3). However, researchers note that diet plays a minor role in vitamin D status, with sun exposure accounting for 90% of vitamin D in the body in those who do not supplement (3,4).

The Institute for Medicine sets the RDA for vitamin D at 600 IU/day, however several studies have found this level of intake is insufficient to maintain normal serum levels throughout pregnancy (5,6). Metaanalyses on maternal effects of vitamin D deficiency indicate increased risk for gestational diabetes (OR 1.38-1.87), preeclampsia (OR 1.58-1.79), and SGA infants (OR 1.52-1.85) (7,8). Vitamin D is known to impact blood sugar regulation, and early pregnancy vitamin D deficiency has been linked to a significantly increased risk for gestational diabetes (GDM) (9). Even in women with diagnosed GDM, deficiency in vitamin D may impact glycemic control. An observational study in women with GDM found that those with adequate vitamin D has significantly lower fasting BG (mean 7.2mg/dl lower), one hour postprandial BG (mean 43.2mg/dl lower), and HbA1c levels (0.4% lower) compared to women with inadequate serum vitamin D (10). Randomized controlled trials are needed to see if correcting vitamin D deficiency could prevent GDM or improve glycemic control. Regardless, adequate maternal vitamin D is of crucial importance to the developing fetus. In infants with rickets, 81% of mothers had severe vitamin D deficiency while pregnant (<10ng/ml) (11). Even more concerning is the long-term impact on the health of a child born to a mother with vitamin D deficiency. A 2006 study from the Lancet found that bone development remained hindered at age 9 in children of mothers who were vitamin D deficient during their pregnancy (12). Maternal vitamin D deficiency may also be associated with childhood risk of asthma, language impairment, schizophrenia, type 1 DM, and multiple sclerosis. (13-18).

The question then remains: How do we safely normalize vitamin D levels in expecting mothers and will it improve outcomes? A recent double blind, placebo controlled, randomized controlled trial on vitamin D supplementation in 450 ethnically diverse women showed that supplementing with vitamin D was both safe and effective at raising serum levels (19). Women were given a daily vitamin D supplement of 400 IU (control), 2,000 IU, or 4,000 IU with serum vitamin D levels measured throughout pregnancy and at birth. Only 50% of women receiving 400 IU/day had sufficient serum vitamin D levels at term, compared to 70.8% and 82.0% in the 2,000 IU and 4,000 IU groups, respectively. A similar pattern was seen in infant vitamin D sufficiency with 39.7%, 58.2% and 78.6% achieving normal vitamin D levels at birth in the 400 IU, 2,000IU, and 4,000 IU groups, respectively. Despite supplementing with levels well above the RDA, no single adverse events were attributed to vitamin D supplementation or circulation of vitamin D levels, and no hypervitaminosis D was observed. Moreover, women receiving higher doses of vitamin D supplements had significantly lower rates of maternal comorbidities, which included GDM (19). While more randomized controlled trials are needed to examine this association, it does give clinicians an extra reason to assess vitamin D levels in pregnant women, especially in light of the staggering rates of deficiency.

According to ACOG, pregnant women who should be screened for vitamin D deficiency include those who are ethnic minorities, live in cold climates, reside in northern latitudes, wear sunscreen or protective clothing, or are vegetarian. Ask yourself what percent of your patient population meets this criteria. Note that at least two thirds of the US is above the 33 degree North parallel (denoted roughly by drawing a line from Long Beach, CA to Atlanta, GA), which means people living above that latitude produce minimal or no vitamin D from sun exposure from November to February (1). ACOG goes on to suggest that when vitamin D deficiency is identified during pregnancy, most experts agree that 1,000 to 2,000 IU of vitamin D per day is safe (20). Aside from the potential to reduce maternal comorbidities, normalizing maternal vitamin D levels may have lasting effects on infants. If your practice is not already screening at-risk patients, consider the potential benefits of testing serum 25-hydroxy vitamin D and supplementing women who are deficient in this essential nutrient. Keep in mind that most prenatal vitamins contain 400-600 IU of vitamin D and additional supplementation is often needed to normalize already low vitamin D levels.

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- ✓ 2nd place \$100 Cash Tisheena Redhouse Phillip LPN GN (Navajo Area SSEP Associate Prog. Montazuma Creek, UT)
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On October 25, 2013, SSEP co-sponsored a series of Webinars with the Navajo Area Sweet Success Group Associate Programs and the Navajo Area Diabetes Program that featured six (6) nationally known speakers to present **Sweet Success Practice Standards for Diabetes in Pregnancy: an SSEP Associate Program Update.** The presentations included:

- Weight Gain during Pregnancy: How Much is too Much? by Naomi Stotland, MD
- Risk of Obesity/Metabolic Syndrome in Offspring of Women with Diabetes during Pregnancy by Ann Kershnar, MD
- Sweet Success Medical Nutrition Therapy Update by Lily Nichols, RD
- Collaborate Panel Discussion on Pre-Conception and Postpartum Follow-Up Clinical Applications of Current Research by **Ellen Wells Seely, MD & Siri Kjos, MD**
- When Diet and Exercise are Not Enough by Maribeth Inturrisi, RN MS CNS CDE

The Webinars were exceptionally well attended, and the day of the viewing they offered a total of 6.5 continuing education for nurses and dietitians. There was no registration fee, as the event was covered by support from the Navajo Area Diabetes Program and was supported by an education grant from Novo Nordisk, Inc. We are considering providing more of these sessions in 2014. Watch our website for information or contact us at ssep1@verizon.net.

The sessions from 2013 presentations are now available for viewing at no cost at the following links.

http://ihs.adobeconnect.com/p5l14n3od9b/ - Dr. Siri Kjos

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