

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT SOUTHWESTERN RESEARCHERS FIND SIMILAR RATES OF HEALTHY BIRTHS FOR HEALTHY MOTHERS, IN-CONTROL DIABETIC MOTHERS

DALLAS – Nov. 25, 2002 – There's good news for expectant mothers who have diabetes, the most common medical complication of pregnancy.

Women who are diagnosed with diabetes during pregnancy, who are otherwise healthy and whose glucose, or blood sugar, is controlled by diet alone deliver healthy infants at virtually the same rate as nondiabetic mothers, according to results from a 10-year analysis of more than 145,000 mothers by researchers at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. Their findings appear in the November issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

"Even better, we learned that women with gestational diabetes controlled by diet alone had no increase in malformations over nondiabetic women," said Dr. Jeanne Sheffield, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology and the paper's lead author.

Sheffield said this study is the first to examine the malformation rate of infants born to mothers with existing diabetes and diabetes developed during pregnancy compared to those of nondiabetic mothers.

The study also showed that expectant mothers who required insulin treatment for their diabetes during pregnancy have as much as a fourfold increased risk of having infants with malformations (6 percent of their infants) compared to mothers who did not have diabetes (1.5 percent), Sheffield said.

The assumption has always been that women with pregestational diabetes were at an even higher risk for delivering babies with malformations, Sheffield said. But the study showed this not to be true; their risk was the same as for women with gestational diabetes who required insulin.

"Our results may help allay fears for many women and their families, as well as provide information to physicians on how to monitor and treat their pregnant patients with diabetes," she said. "They may also provide important information related to genetic counseling and other referrals when there are problems."

(MORE)

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Approximately 106,000 American women had pregnancies complicated by diabetes in 1999, a total of 1.7 percent of live births that year. Ninety percent of these pregnancies involved gestational diabetes, a condition that may be associated with genetics, obesity and diet.

The study, which examined births from Jan. 1, 1991 to Dec. 31, 2000, included 145,196 women – all who delivered at Parkland Memorial Hospital, the teaching hospital for UT Southwestern faculty physicians.

Of these deliveries, 2,687 – or about 1.9 percent – involved women who had diabetes. Seventy-six percent of these women, or 2,042, developed gestational diabetes and did not require insulin. Another 9 percent (241) did require insulin therapy to control their gestational diabetes. Some 15 percent of the mothers had the disease before becoming pregnant.

Other UT Southwestern researchers from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology were: Drs. Kenneth Leveno, senior author of the paper; Donald McIntire, associate professor; Brian Casey, assistant professor; and Erin Koster, assistant instructor.

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