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Original Research Article

Analysis of the severity of anxiety in a group of pregnant women hospitalized for threatened premature delivery



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ABSTRACT

Introduction: An important element that contributes to the increase of the level of anxiety in pregnant women is threatened preterm labor and the need for hospitalization in pregnancy pathology department. Fear of low intensity, by induction of autonomic and endocrine response, can stimulate defense mechanisms of the body, thus, to a certain extent, having beneficial effects on pregnancy. In contrast, excessive and imprinted fear has negative effects by predisposing to pregnancy and fetal development disorders.

Aim: The aim of the study is to assess the level of anxiety, as a trait and as a state, in a group of pregnant women hospitalized for preterm labor in relation to socio-demographic factors and obstetric situation.

Material and methods: The study included 313 pregnant women hospitalized for threatened preterm labor. Research tools included a questionnaire of own authorship developed to determine characteristics of pregnant subjects and a standardized State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI).

Results and discussion: The mean score of state anxiety (STAI X-1) in the group of pregnant women was 44.27 ± 9.84 , with the score range 20–73 points, which indicates a high level of state anxiety. On the other hand, the mean score of trait anxiety (STAI X-2) in the study group was 44.52 ± 8.93 , with the score range 20–90 points, which indicates the average level of trait anxiety. There was no statistically significant relationship between the intensity of state anxiety and marital status, place of residence and obstetric situation in the study ($P > 0.05$), while significant differences were found between the severity of state anxiety and the age

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and education of the respondents. Statistical analysis showed no significant differences between intensity of anxiety and age, marital status and obstetric situation ($P > 0.05$).

Conclusions: Pregnant women hospitalized due to preterm labor, who were included in the study, were characterized by high levels of state anxiety and average levels of trait anxiety.

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1. Introduction

Preterm delivery is still one of the fundamental problems of modern perinatology due to intensive and expensive treatment of both mother and child, mental and physical disorders occurring in premature babies and high rates of perinatal mortality.^{1–5}

Anxiety is one of the most important emotions that has both physiological and psychological features, affecting human functioning and accompanying the body throughout the life. An important element that contributes to the increase of the level of anxiety in pregnant women is threatened preterm labor and the need for hospitalization in pregnancy pathology department. Fear of low intensity, by induction of autonomic and endocrine response, can stimulate defense mechanisms of the body, thus, to a certain extent, having beneficial effects on pregnancy. In contrast, excessive and imprinted fear has negative effects by predisposing to pregnancy and fetal development disorders.^{6–8}

2. Aim

The aim of the study was to assess the level of anxiety, as a trait and as a state, in a group of pregnant women hospitalized for preterm labor in relation to socio-demographic factors and obstetric situation.

3. Material and methods

The study included 313 pregnant women hospitalized for preterm labor from October 2010 to March 2012 in the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics with Admission Room of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński Provincial Specialist Hospital in Lublin and in the Department of Obstetrics and Perinatology of the Medical University of Lublin.

The study was conducted with the approval of the Bioethics Committee of the Medical University of Lublin. The study was not randomized. Eligibility criteria were hospitalization for preterm labor, gestational age between 23 and 37 weeks and no history of mental disorders. In total, 322 questionnaires were given to pregnant women and correctly completed questionnaires were obtained from 313 respondents. Efficiency ratio of data collection was 97.2%. Incorrect or incomplete questionnaires were not analyzed in the study.

Each of the questionnaires provided to pregnant subjects included a survey of own authorship developed to determine characteristics of pregnant women and State-Trait Anxiety

Inventory (STAI; CD Spilberger, RL Gorsuch and RE Lushene), as a standardized research tool. The authors of the Polish version of the STAI, developed in 1987, are CD Spilberger, J Strelau, M Tysarczyk and K Wrześniewski.

In the study population, 62 (19.81%) pregnant women were under 25 years of age, while 137 (43.77%) respondents were between 26 and 30 years of age, and 114 (36.42%) women were above 30 years of age. In total, 24 (7.67%) patients had primary or vocational education, 79 (25.24%) had secondary education, and 210 (67.09%) pregnant women had higher education. Among respondents, 285 of pregnant women (91.05%) were married and 28 (8.96%) were unmarried, 131 (41.85%) women were residents of capital cities and 86 (27.48%) of district cities, while 96 (30.67%) pregnant women were residents of rural areas. Social and living conditions were reported as very good by 104 (33.23%) pregnant women, as good by 162 (51.76%) respondents, as average by 46 (14.70%), and as bad by 1 (0.32%) subject.

Of the 313 (100%) pregnant women hospitalized due to preterm labor, 151 (48.24%) were pregnant for the first time, 99 (31.63%) for the second time, 40 (12.78%) for the third time, while in 23 (7.35%) respondents it was the fourth and subsequent pregnancy. In 246 (78.59%) patients the current pregnancy was planned, while 67 (21.41%) respondents did not plan the current pregnancy. Single pregnancies were found in 299 (95.53%) women, while multiple pregnancies occurred in 14 (4.47%) subjects. In the study group, 60 (19.17%) pregnant women were between 23 and 27 weeks gestation, 103 (32.91%) between 28 and 32 weeks, and 150 (47.92%) between 33 and 37 weeks gestation.

4. Results

STAI results showed that the mean state anxiety (STAI X-1) score in the group of pregnant women was 44.27 ± 9.84 (range 20–73 points), which indicates a high level of state anxiety. Cronbach's reliability coefficient was 0.80. On the other hand, mean trait anxiety (STAI X-2) score in the study group was 44.52 ± 8.93 (range 20–90 points), which indicates the average level of trait anxiety. Cronbach's reliability coefficient was 0.79.

Table 1 presents results of the assessment of the level of state anxiety (STAI X-1) in relation to socio-demographic variables.

The mean level of state anxiety score in the group of patients above 30 years of age was 42.46 and was significantly lower ($P = 0.02$) than in the group of respondents aged 26–30 years (45.48). On the other hand, the mean score in the group of pregnant women below 25 years of age was 44.94 and there were no statistically significant differences ($P > 0.05$) compared to

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