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Anxiety in high- and low-risk pregnancies and its influence on perinatal outcome

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Abstract

Objective

This study investigates pregnancy- and birth-giving-related fears of women of different risk groups and examines their influence on pregnancy and delivery.

Study design:

Prospective study.

Setting:

Pregnant out-patients were recruited in medical practices in Berlin. Data on perinatal outcome were obtained from the charts of the obstetric units.

Participants:

589 pregnant women between 16 and 22 weeks of gestation.

Methods: Pregnant women were interviewed by a semi-standardized questionnaire and related to information from the charts about perinatal outcome of the obstetric units.

Results:

77 women were at risk of anxiety influencing pregnancy and perinatal outcome due to chronic diseases, 61 had a history of previous miscarriage, 38 had a history of termination of pregnancy. 288 had no risk factors. Women with previous miscarriage had the highest degree of pregnancy-related fears. Their pregnancies were significantly more often complicated by the threat of miscarriage. A relationship between high levels of pregnancy-related fears and pregnancy complications was only found in the group of "low- risk women".

Conclusion:

Women with a history of miscarriage evidently make use of special care services and social support services. For these women no correlation between pregnancy-related fears and complications was found. Low-risk pregnant women seem to have fewer means of coping with their unreasonable fear.

1. Introduction

Women undergo substantial physical and psychological changes during pregnancy, affecting also partner relationship and social environment. Fears of complications during pregnancy and delivery as well as uncertainty concerning their roles as mothers are common among

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