NUTRITION AND EMOTIONAL STRESS DURING PREGNANCY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of nutrition on psychological well-being of the pregnant women during the last trimester of pregnancy. We examined retrospectively 2 groups of women. 1st group: In this group 57 women were included. These women had a balanced diet and had taken special supplements for iron, folic acid and calcium. The mean dietary intake of these women was 2700 kcal/day with a weight gain of 9-13 kg during pregnancy. 2nd group: In this group 33 women were included. These women did not comply with all the above. The mean dietary intake of these women was 3100 kcal/day with a weight gain of 14.5-29 kg during pregnancy. In our study we tried to include women with as close as possible a same profile (age, parity, difficulty in previous labours and attitude towards their pregnancies).

Results: 1st group: 51 (89.5%) women approaching delivery though that the experience was one of the happiest times of their lives. 6 women reported no influence of pregnancy on their emotional status or severe emotional stress.

2nd group: 30 (90.9%) women underwent severe emotional stress during the third trimester, and were afraid for the possibility to have a macrosomic infant or pre-eclampsia with subsequent difficulties in labor. These difference are statistically highly significant (p<0.001). Our results show that nutrition can influence, in a great degree, the psychological well-being of the pregnant women in the last trimester of pregnancy. Of course, we have to take into consideration that other factors may also influence the psychological profile of a women nearing labor.

Introduction

The mother's nutrition from the moment of conception is an important factor in the development of the infant and future well-being. The pregnant woman should be encouraged to eat a balanced diet and should be made aware of special needs for iron, folic acid and calcium (1). While the complaints of nausea and vomiting are significantly more common in younger women, anorexia is more common in older women (2). The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of nutrition and weight gain on psychological well-being of the pregnant women during the last trimester of pregnancy.
trimester, and were afraid for the possibility to have a macrosomic infant or pre-eclampsia with subsequent difficulties in labor. 3 women reported no influence of pregnancy on their emotional status or described pregnancy as a happy experience. The comparison of the 1st group with the 2nd one concerning positive feelings and the comparison of the 2nd group with the 1st one concerning negative feelings gave a total chi-square of 56.268 with \( p = 0.0001 \).

**Discussion**

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommends a weight gain of 10-12 kg during pregnancy (1). Women with excessive weight gain during pregnancy are likely to have macrosomic infants with possible subsequent difficulties in labor. On the other hand, emotional factors are of great importance in pregnancy and it is essential to understand the psychosocial and biologic factors that can influence very strongly the course of pregnancy (3,4). Previous studies showed a considerable degree of psychological disturbances during pregnancy which later decreased significantly during the post-partum (2). During the last trimester of pregnancy the obstetrician must discuss with the patient about normal fetal development and ultrasonography is valuable because the mother can see the fetus. Such demonstrations are useful in encouraging compliance with good prenatal care as avoidance of smoking and excessive weight gain.

The results of our study show that nutrition and normal or abnormal weight gain can influence, in a great degree, the psychological well-being of the pregnant women in the last trimester of pregnancy. Of course, we have to take into consideration that other factors may also influence the psychological profile of a woman nearing labor.

**References**