Cannabis Use During Pregnancy and While Breastfeeding: Sorting Through Hazy Evidence

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Disclosures

 No conflicts of interest related to the content of this presentation

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Learning Objectives

- Define prevalence of cannabis use in pregnancy and reported reasons for use.
- Counsel patients regarding the risks of cannabis use during pregnancy and while breastfeeding based on current evidence.
- Recommend and utilize available resources when counseling individuals regarding cannabis use in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Background

- Cannabis most common illicit drug used in pregnancy
- Crosses the placenta
- Increasing use with increasing legalization of recreational cannabis



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Prevalence of Cannabis Use

- Reported prevalence 3-30%
- Data from NSDUH
 - Cross sectional, nationally representative
 - 2.4% past-month use among pregnant patients in 2002
 - 3.9% in 2014
 - 4.9% in 2016

Brown et al JAMA 2016; https://www.sambsa.com/data/report/results-2016-national-survey-drue-use and-health-detailed-tables

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Prevalence

- Retrospective cohort (2009-17)
- Kaiser Permanente Northern California
- N=281,025
- Urine toxicology 4.9%
- Self-report 2.5%
- Being older, of Hispanic ethnicity and lower household income were associated with misclassification of not using cannabis by self-report

Young-Wolff et al J Addict Med 2020

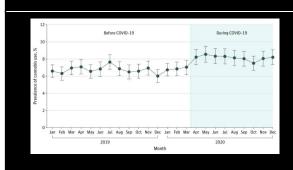
CCTSI Cross-Sectional Pilot Results

- N=116 paired samples (cord & survey)
- 2.6% reported to healthcare provider
- 6.0% reported use in last 30 days on anonymous survey
- 10.3% THC-A above LOQ (200 pg/g) in the umbilical cord homogenate
- 22.4% THC-A above LOD (100 pg/g)

Met» Obstet Gynecol 2018

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What happened during pandemic?



Young-Wolff et al, JAMA 2021

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Cannabis Use Disorder

- 2012-13 National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions-III
- 414 pregnant and 902 postpartum individuals
- Prevalence past-year cannabis use 9.8%
- Prevalence cannabis use disorder 3.2%
- Odds of use higher with co-existing mental health disorders

Brown et al Drug Alcohol Depend 2023

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- Tricounty Health Department in CO surveyed clients participating in Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infant and Children (WIC)
- Monthly caseload of 25,000 clients
- Convenience sample of approx. 1700 individuals

CDPHE, Monitoring Health Concerns Related to Marijuana in Colorado: 2014

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Perceived Benefits WIC Survey

Reasons for Use	Use Ever	Current Use	Past Use
	(%, n)	(%, n)	(% , n)
Help with depression/anxiety/stress	35% (164)	63% (60)	28% (103)
Help with pain	29% (135)	60% (57)	21% (78)
Help with nausea/vomiting	23% (108)	48% (46)	17% (62)
For fun/recreation	59% (277)	39% (37)	65% (240)
Other reason	16% (75)	14% (13)	16% (58)

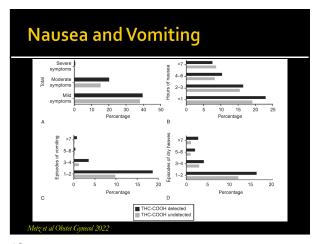
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Nausea and Vomiting

- Retrospective cohort (N=279,457)
- Kaiser Northern California
- Universal screening with utox and questionnaire
- ICD diagnoses for N/V of pregnancy
- Severe nausea (2.4%), mild nausea (15.2%)
- Individuals with severe NVP (aOR 3.80, 95%CI 3.19-4.52) and mild NVP (aOR 2.37, 95% CI 2.17-2.59) had increased odds of cannabis use

Young-Wolff KC et al JAMA Internal Med 2018



Increasing Perceived Safety									
National Survey on Drug Use and Health data									
	No past 30 day use, pregnant	No past 30 day use, non- pregnant	Past 30 day use, pregnant	Past 30 day use, non- pregnant					
2005	3.5%	3.1%	25.8%	23.7%					
2015	16.5%	14.8%	65.4%	62.6					
Jarlenski et al 2017									

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Problems with Existing Studies

- Lack of quantification/timing of exposure
- Difficulty adjusting for tobacco, other drugs, sociodemographic factors
- Reliance on self-report
 - Shiono et al (1995) completed a prospective cohort study with structured interviews and maternal serum toxicology screens
 - maternal serum toxicology screens
 70% of individuals with positive THC on serum tox screen denied use in structured interview

Shiana Am I Ohstet Gynecal 199



Perinatal Outcomes Meta-Analysis

- Gunn et al conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis
 - Primary Outcomes: maternal, fetal or neonatal up to 6 weeks postpartum after cannabis exposure
 - Conducted meta-analyses when 3 or more studies available with same outcome (anemia, LBW, BW, neonatal length, NICU admission, GA at del, head circumference, PTB)
- Increased odds anemia, LBW, NICU admit
- More studies needed

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Neonatal Outcomes: Meta-Analysis

- Conner et al performed systematic review and meta-analysis
- Aim: estimate if marijuana use increases risk of adverse neonatal outcomes
 - Primary outcomes: LBW (<2500gm), PTB (<37 wk)
 - Secondary outcomes: BW, GA at delivery, SGA, level II nursery or greater, stillbirth, SAB, low Apgar, abruption, perinatal death

Conner et al Obstet Gynecol 2016

Neonatal Outcomes: Meta-Analysis

- 31 studies total (12 LBW, 14 PTB)
- Pooled unadjusted data demonstrated an association between THC and LBW/PTB
 - LBW (15.4% vs 10.4%, RR 1.43, 95% Cl 1.27-1.62)
 - PTB (15.3% vs 9.6%, RR 1.32, 95% Cl 1.14-1.54)
- After adjustment for tobacco and other confounders no longer an association
 - LBW (pooled RR 1.16, 95% CI 0.98-1.37)
- PTB (pooled RR 1.08, 95% Cl 0.82-1.43)

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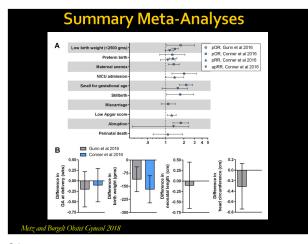
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Neonatal Outcomes: Meta-Analysis

- Planned subanalysis of moderate to heavy use (defined as at least once per week)
- Cannabis use associated with low birth weight (RR 1.90, 95% CI 1.44-2.45)
- Cannabis use associated with preterm birth (RR 2.04, 95% CI 1.32-3.17)

Conner et al Obstet Gynecol 2016, ACOG Committee Opinion

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Marchand Meta-Analysis

- Increased risk of LBW, 8 studies, pooled RR 2.06 (1.25-3.42)
- Increased risk of SGA, 6 studies, pooled RR 1.61 (1.44-1.79)
- Increased risk of preterm delivery, 12 studies, pooled RR 1.28 (1.16-1.42)
- Increased risk of NICU admission, 6 studies, pooled RR 1.38 (1.18-1.62)

 Marchand et al JAMA Open 2022

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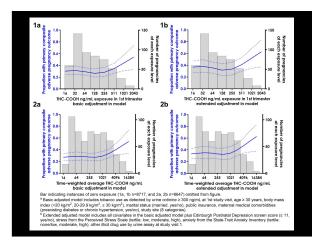
Cannabis Use and APOs

- Ancillary study of NICHD nuMoM2b cohort (2010-13)
- Urine samples from three timepoints in pregnancy assayed for THC-COOH, cotinine and other drugs
- 9,257 participants; 610 (6.6%) exposed to cannabis

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Cannabis Use and APOs

- Cannabis use associated with composite outcome related to placental dysfunction (SGA, HDP, stillbirth, MIPTB)
 - 26% exposed vs 17% unexposed, aRR 1.27, 95% Cl 1.07-1.49)
- Not significant when use stopped in first trimester



Stillbirth

- DATA ARE LIMITED
- Case-control study by Stillbirth Collaborative Research Network
 - Association between stillbirth and cannabis use as demonstrated by cord homogenate positive for THC (OR 2.34, 95% Cl 1.13-4.81)
 - Adjusting for cotinine in the maternal serum to account for tobacco use reduced the stillbirth OR for cannabis by approximately 10%

Varner Obstet Gynecol 2014

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Congenital Anomalies

- DATA ARE LIMITED AND MIXED
- Linn (1983) found no association with major malformation (OR 1.36, 95% Cl 0.97-1.91)
- Large retrospective cohort studies based on birth defects registries
 - Incomplete ascertainment of confounders
 - Potential for recall bias

I inn Am I Public Health 1983 Gibson Aust NZI Obstet Genaecal 198

Congenital Anomalies

- Atlanta Birth Defects Registry
- 122 cases VSD and 3,029 controls
- Adjusted for maternal age, race, overt diabetes, vitamin use
- Periconceptual cannabis associated with VSD (OR 1.90, 95% Cl 1.29-2.81)
- More data are needed
- Not adequate evidence of association with any specific congenital birth defect
 Williams LJ at el Birth Defects Res A Clin Mol Tenatal 2004

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Anomalies: Systematic Review

- 11 studies
- Pooled aOR 1.22 (95% Cl 1.00-1.50)
- 2 anomalies associated with cannabis use
 - Ebstein anomaly, two studies, aOR 2.19 (95% CI 1.25-3.82)
 - Gastroschisis, five studies, aOR 2.50 (95% Cl 1.09-5.74)
- Heterogeneous studies, high risk of bias, inconsistent evidence

Delker at el Obstet Gynecol 2023

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Paternal Cannabis Use

- Preconception paternal cannabis use associated with lower birth weight, SAB and SIDS
- Altered sperm DNA methylation in genes involved in neurodevelopment and autism spectrum disorder

Lo et al Am J Obstet Gynecol 2022

Neurodevelopment

- Alterations in neurotransmitters in rat models
 - Especially dopaminergic pathways
- Postmortem human fetal brains (elective terminations 17-22 weeks)
 - Dopamine receptors reduced in marijuanaexposed fetuses
 - Most prominent effect in males
 - Directly correlated with amount of cannabis used during pregnancy

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Prospective Longitudinal Studies

STUDY AND INVESTIGATOR	INITIATION DATE AND LOCATION	STUDY SIZE (N)	POPULATION
Ottawa Prenatal Prospective Study (OPPS), Fried et al	1978 Ottawa, Canada	180	Low-risk, European-American, middle-class; Exposure to marijuana and cigarettes
Maternal Health Practices and Child Development Study (MHPCD), Day et al	1982 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	636	High-risk, mixed ethnicity (57% African American), single (71%), low socioeconomic status; Exposure to marijuana and alcohol
Generation R Study, Hoffman et al	2002 Rotterdam, Netherlands	9778	Multi-ethnic, higher socio- economic status

Drug Alcohol Depend 1980;5:415-24. Neurotoxicol Teratol 1998;20:293-306. Clin Perinatol 1991;18:77-91. Neurotoxicol 13:329-34. Paediatr Perinat Epidemiol 2004;18:61-72. Prog Neuropsychopharmacol Biol Psychiatry. 2014;52:45-52.

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Neurodevelopment

- DATA ARE LIMITED BY CONFOUNDING
- OPPS
 - No differences between groups below age 4 years
 - At age 4 years, increased behavioral problems, worse language comprehension, decreased sustained attention and memory difficulties
- MHPCD
 - Decreased verbal reasoning at age 6 years
 - Worse academic performance at age 10 years
- Increased substance use at age 14 years
 Fried Life Sci 1995, Day Neurotoxicol Tentol 1994

Neurodevelopment

- Generation R Study
- Higher aggression scores in cannabisexposed girls, but not boys at 18 months
- No differences in behavior at 3 years of age
- Ongoing follow-up into adulthood for children born from 2002-2006

Jaddoe et al Eur J Epidemiol 2012

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Neurodevelopment

- Cross-sectional study (N=11,489 children)
- Adolescent Brain and Cognitive Development Study
- 5.7% exposed to cannabis prenatally
- Mean age at follow-up 9.9 years
- Cannabis exposure after maternal knowledge of pregnancy associated with greater psychotic-like experiences and externalizing, attention, thought and social problems

Paul SE et al IAMA Psych 2020

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Neurodevelopment

- Secondary analysis of two MFMU parallel RCTs related to maternal thyroid function
- 1,197 pregnant individuals; 8.3% positive for cotinine and 3.9% positive for THC-COOH
- No difference in childhood IQ at 60 months of age between exposed to THC and unexposed
- Exposed children worse attention scores at 48 months of age

Smid et al Obstet Gynecol 2022

National Academy of Sciences

- Consistent association between prenatal cannabis use and lower birth weight
- Limited evidence of an association between cannabis use and NICU admission
- Insufficient evidence of an association between cannabis use and neurocognitive outcomes
 - Cannot adjust for subtle environmental differences

Committee on the Health Effects of Marijuana, http://www.nap.edu/246252017

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Breastfeeding

- THC passes to the neonate in breastmilk
- Letter to the editor NEJM of two patients
 - Chronic heavy use can result in levels up to 8x plasma

Perez-Reyes NEJM 1982

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Breastfeeding

- Observational study of 8 women
 - Purchased product with known concentration of THC
 - Abstained from use for 24 hrs prior
 - Inhaled cannabis then collected breast milk at 20 minutes, 1, 2 and 4 hours
 - Exclusively breastfed infant ingests mean of 2.5% of maternal dose

Baker Obstet Gynecol 2018

Breastfeeding

- 54 samples from milk donors
- Delta-9-THC detectable 63% samples up to 6 days after last reported use
- Median concentration 9.47 ng/mL
- Number of daily uses and time from sample collection to analysis were predictors of THC concentration in breastmilk

Bertrand et al Pediatrics

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Breastfeeding

- Prospective cohort study to estimate time to elimination of marijuana metabolite from breastmilk (N=25)
- Inclusion criterion of plan for abstinence
 - 12/25 abstinent by plasma sampling
- Primarily inhalation consumption during pregnancy (more than 2 times weekly)
- Detectable THC in breastmilk in all participants during 6- week study period

Vymore et al JAMA Peds 202

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Breastfeeding

- 402 serial samples obtained and analyzed
- Half-life 17 days
- Projected elimination6 weeks
- Cannot "pump and dump"

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Wymore et al IAMA Peds 2

ACOG Committee Opinion

- People should not use marijuana during pregnancy or while lactating
 - Ob-gyns should not prescribe for medicinal purposes to pregnant or lactating individuals
 - Insufficient evidence for effects on nursing infant

ACOG, Committee Opinion No. 637, Marijuana Use During Pregnancy and Lactation, Obste

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How are we doing now?

- Holland et al recorded patient encounters and evaluated obstetric provider response to disclosure of cannabis use
- 90/460 (19%) reported use at OB intake
- 47 different health care providers
- 48% of the time provider did not respond to cannabis disclosure
- When discussed, response non-specific and focused on tox screens and social services

Holland et al, Obstet Gynecol 2016

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Dispensary Project

- Mystery shopper study (400 randomly selected dispensaries)
- Caller was 8 weeks pregnant with nausea
- Nearly 70% had product recommendations
 - Predominantly recommended edibles
 - 65% based recommendation on personal opinion
 - Only 32% recommended discussion with healthcare provider without prompting

Dickson et al Obstet Gynecol 2018

How are we doing now?

- Cross-sectional study 2017-2019 PRAMS
- Prenatal care visits 8 states
 - 2 with legal cannabis
- N=10,696
- 37.2% not asked about cannabis use
- 62.7% not advised against cannabis use
- Of those reporting cannabis use, 49.8% advised not to use in pregnancy
- 7.7% advised to use cannabis at PNV

Skelton et al, Am J Obstet Gynecol 2023

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What do we tell patients?

- No known benefits of cannabis use in pregnancy
- Possible risks of cannabis use in pregnancy
- Advise patients not to use cannabis during pregnancy
- No known "safe" amount of cannabis in pregnancy and while breastfeeding

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Grant Support

- University of Colorado CCTSI Child-Maternal Health Junior Pilot Program
- Women's Reproductive Health Research Scholar K12HD001271
- NIDA Ro1DA049832



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Cannabidiol

- Cannabidiol (CBD) component of Cannabis sativa plant
- Not psychoactive, sedative, ? therapeutic
- Little known about CBD in isolation in pregnancy
- In vitro models demonstrate adverse effects on trophoblasts and placental remodeling

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Cannabidiol

- Zebra fish embryos
- Neural activity decreased more by CBD than THC
- Both decreased neural activity
- Possible synergistic effect with more pronounced effect of CBD in presence of THC



Cannabidiol

- Biologically plausible effect on
- placentation and trophoblast invasion
 Endocannabinoid system active in early pregnancy with placentation
- Active in late pregnancy during fetal neurodevelopment
- Essentially no data specific to CBD in humans

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