Abstract

Objective There is controversy concerning whether exercise during pregnancy may increase preterm delivery risk and type of delivery. The effect of pregnant Latin-American women engaging in vigorous exercise during the second and third trimester was examined regarding type of delivery and gestational age. Materials and Methods This was a secondary analysis of data from a controlled randomized trial for determining the influence of physical exercise on pregnant women’s endothelial function. The study included 35 nulliparous women, gestational week 16-20 attending prenatal care at three tertiary hospitals in Colombia, who were randomly assigned to one of two groups. The experimental group engaged in aerobic exercise involving 55 % - 75 % maximum heart rate for 60 min, three times a week for 12 weeks. The control group engaged in their usual physical activity. Maternal weight, height, weight gain, blood pressure and type of delivery were recorded; gender, abdominal and head circumference (cm), weight (g), height (cm), vitality (Apgar score at 1 and 5 min) and gestational age at the time of delivery (in weeks, days) were recorded for the newborn. Results There was no difference in type of delivery by the end of the 12-week program (p>0.05), nor regarding newborn anthropometric variables, Apgar score, or maternal variables concerning weight, height, relative weight gain, blood pressure or weeks of gestation (p>0.05). Conclusion The potential public health benefits of vigorous exercise were enormous. This study supported existing guidelines indicating that Latin-American women may begin or maintain an on-going exercise program during pregnancy.

Keywords

Gestational age, exercise, pregnancy, clinical trial (source: MeSH, NLM).