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Can the fetus survive a Covid 19 attack?

The outbreak of COVID-19 and its classification as a pandemic has raised many alarms. The impact of the SARS-CoV-2 virus on the pregnant woman and her unborn child is of utmost concern. Previous viral outbreaks taught us that this population is very vulnerable and among the most affected. Pregnant women infected with COVID-19 were associated with a higher rate of preterm birth, cesarean section, and perinatal death, though it appears that those who are critically ill are at an increased risk of such complications. One major concern is the transmission of this virus from the mother to her fetus during pregnancy. Although rare, review of the literature has indicated that it is possible, with some reporting that 30% of infections were likely due to vertical transmission. The impact of the infection in the neonate however has been reported to be mild and none worrying. It appears that the fetus is being attacked by 3 weapons during this pandemic, the virus itself through vertical transmission, severe maternal illness that jeopardizes fetal health, and antiviral medication which may prove to be teratogenic.

Scientists believe that a multitude of many circumstantial factors may protect the fetus such as the allogenic rejection of the decidua, the buffering nature of the placenta, fetal programming, and certain developmental or epigenetic modulations that shelter the fetus from this perilous virus. The short-term impact of COVID-19 infection on the fetus is manifesting itself as we speak, however, the impact of this virus down-the-line remains to be explored, with emphasis on long-term surveillance for possible neurodevelopmental sequel.

Biography

Hisham arab graduated from King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and completed his postgraduate training in obstetrics and gynecology in Canada. He is now a senior consultant obstetrician gynecologist and perinatologist and director of the Women and Fetal Health Program at the Dr Arab Medical Center, a private practice in Jeddah, specializing in Maternal Fetal Medicine, reproductive endocrinology and infertility, and minimally invasive surgery. Dr Arab is a founder and former secretary general of the Saudi Obstetrics and Gynecological Society, executive board member of the International Society of Gynecologic Endoscopy, chairman, Arab Maternal Fetal Medicine Expert Group, chairman of the Saudi Endometriosis Group. He is a visiting professor at Weill Cornell Medical College, New York, USA. He is editor of the EC Gynecology and Journal and Donald School Journal of Ultrasound in Ob/Gyn, and his international presence persists today as a speaker and researcher. He published 4 papers this year on Covid-19.

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