

EDITORIAL

COVID-19 Vaccination During Pregnancy and Breast Feeding is Safe and Effective

For the Mother, the Unborn Child and the Baby

Since the start of this pandemic, over 38.9 million people have been diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2 infection in the United States and over 638,000 people have died (1). With the rampant spread of the Delta variant, in the last 28 days alone, over 3.7 million people have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the United States alone and in the last 14 days, more than 150,000 patients/day have been diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2 infection (1). These observations are particularly disconcerting given the fact that we have three effective vaccines that have been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for use in the United States which has resulted in the vaccination of over 369 million people of which, more than 173 million have been fully vaccinated (2, 3).

Women who are pregnant, those trying to become pregnant, and/or breast feeding are particularly vulnerable to infection with the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2. Despite the overwhelming evidence of the safety and efficacy of available vaccines in this vulnerable population, less than 25% of pregnant and breastfeeding women are vaccinated. These perturbing statistics have resulted in a rapid rise in hospitalizations of this vulnerable population with serious consequences for both the mother and the unborn child. Once diagnosed, many of the patients in this susceptible population are being treated with the cocktail of REGEN-CoV monoclonal antibody infusion which has been hailed as a “miracle” therapeutic intervention. However, it must be underscored that infusion of monoclonal antibodies provides only transient protection and it must not be considered as an alternative to vaccination.

There are many compounding factors that have guided this high level of hesitation among pregnant and breast-feeding women from getting vaccinated. Misinformation and its amplification in the social

media are perhaps the single most important factor leading to this observed outcome. It is therefore imperative that scientifically proven facts are considered while making such crucial decisions. Evidence concerning the safety and effectiveness of approved COVID-19 vaccines has been growing suggesting that the benefits far outweigh any known or potential risk in this population. Furthermore, contrary to the prevailing misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccines, there is no evidence that they cause any issues related to fertility in both men and women and is safe for the unborn baby as well as those being breastfed.

Based on the available data that is supported by observations in our high-volume Women’s Hospital – a *Level IV Maternal Facility*, we conclude that pregnant women are more susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection and getting a COVID-19 vaccine can protect them from severe illness. Additionally, after reviewing all the available scientific data, we have also determined that the available COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and that the benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risk. We therefore recommend that all pregnant women, those trying to get pregnant and/or breast feeding should seriously consider getting vaccinated.

References

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