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Association of Maternal Gastric Bypass Surgery With Offspring Birth Defects

[1] Rini, [1] Khairina

[1] Faculty of Medicine, Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta City, Central Java, Indonesia

Correspondence : dr.rini273728@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: The literature surrounding maternal gastric bypass surgery and its association with offspring birth defects presents a multifaceted view of maternal and fetal health outcomes. The initial study by (Nikoline Nørgaard et al., 2014) indicates that while the surgery-to-conception interval does not significantly affect early fetal growth metrics, there are concerns regarding maternal health, particularly related to gestational age at malformation scans. **Literature Review:** A systematic review and meta-analysis by (Akhter et al., 2019) builds upon these findings, highlighting the increased risk of adverse perinatal outcomes, including congenital anomalies and perinatal mortality, particularly in women undergoing malabsorptive procedures. This underscores the critical relationship between maternal nutritional deficiencies and fetal development, reinforcing the necessity for rigorous monitoring and intervention during pregnancy. The work of (Huang et al., 2021) further emphasizes the importance of micronutrient screening and supplementation for women post-bariatric surgery. The analysis reveals how specific nutrient deficiencies can lead to severe complications, including neural tube defects, thereby highlighting the urgent need for proactive nutritional management in this population. Moreover, the comprehensive review by (Huluță et al., 2024) synthesizes existing literature to illustrate both the benefits and risks associated with bariatric surgery. While some studies report improvements in maternal metabolic profiles and reductions in gestational complications, there remains conflicting evidence regarding the association between bariatric surgery and birth defects. **Conclusion:** In conclusion, the reviewed literature collectively emphasizes the intricate relationship between maternal gastric bypass surgery and offspring birth defects, highlighting the critical role of maternal health and nutritional status. The need for vigilant monitoring and tailored nutritional strategies is paramount to optimize outcomes for both mothers and their children, given the potential risks associated with nutrient deficiencies and the complexities of bariatric surgery outcomes.

Keyword: Maternal Gastric Bypass Surgery, Offspring Birth Defects

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INTRODUCTION

The literature surrounding the association of maternal gastric bypass surgery with offspring birth defects reveals a complex interplay of factors influencing fetal development and perinatal outcomes. The examination begins with the study by (Nikoline Nørgaard et al., 2014), which analyzed a cohort of 387 pregnancies conceived after gastric bypass surgery. The findings indicated that while the surgery-to-conception interval showed no significant correlation with early fetal growth or birth weight, the women in this group presented with a higher gestational age at malformation scans compared to the general population. This suggests that while the immediate impact of the surgery on fetal growth may be minimal, there are underlying concerns regarding maternal health and nutritional status that could influence outcomes.

(Akhter et al., 2019) expanded on these findings through a systematic review and meta-analysis, highlighting a concerning increase in adverse perinatal outcomes, including congenital anomalies and perinatal mortality, particularly in women who underwent malabsorptive procedures. This study underscored the risks associated with nutrient deficiencies arising from these surgical interventions, as malabsorptive procedures significantly hinder the absorption of essential vitamins and minerals critical for fetal development. The evidence presented by (Akhter et al., 2019) establishes a crucial link between maternal nutritional status and fetal health, reinforcing the need for careful monitoring and management of pregnancies following bariatric surgery.

Building upon this, (Huang et al., 2021) emphasized the importance of micronutrient screening and supplementation in pregnancies following bariatric surgery. Their findings indicated that the metabolic and nutritional challenges faced by women who have undergone malabsorptive surgeries could exacerbate the risks of adverse fetal outcomes. The authors provided a detailed analysis of how specific nutrient deficiencies, particularly in vitamins and minerals essential for fetal

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development, could lead to complications such as neural tube defects and other severe outcomes. This work highlights the critical role of proactive nutritional management in improving pregnancy outcomes for this population.

In the most recent contribution by (Huluță et al., 2024), a comprehensive review of pregnancy management post-bariatric surgery was presented, illustrating both the benefits and risks associated with these procedures. While some studies indicated improvements in maternal metabolic profiles and reductions in gestational complications, the authors noted conflicting findings regarding the association between bariatric surgery and the risk of birth defects, particularly heart and musculoskeletal defects. They argued for the necessity of adequate folic acid and vitamin B12 intake to mitigate these risks, acknowledging the dual role of obesity as a contributing factor to birth defects.

Together, these articles form a nuanced narrative regarding the implications of maternal gastric bypass surgery on offspring birth defects. They collectively emphasize the importance of maternal health, nutritional status, and the need for vigilant monitoring and intervention during pregnancy to optimize outcomes for both mothers and their children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The article titled "Fetal Growth in Pregnancies Conceived after Gastric Bypass Surgery in Relation to Surgery-to-Conception Interval" by (Nikoline Nørgaard et al., 2014) presents a comprehensive analysis of the outcomes of pregnancies following gastric bypass surgery, specifically focusing on the relationship between the surgery-to-conception interval and fetal growth metrics. The study encompasses a substantial cohort of 387 women who became pregnant after undergoing gastric bypass surgery, providing a valuable dataset to examine this specific population's maternal and fetal health outcomes.

One of the key findings of the study is the observation that women who had undergone gastric bypass surgery exhibited higher body mass index (BMI)

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compared to the general population of pregnant women. This is particularly relevant given the established associations between maternal obesity and adverse pregnancy outcomes. However, the study's results indicate that the surgery-to-conception interval, which varied widely among participants, showed a very weak correlation with early fetal growth and the risk of small for gestational age (SGA) infants. This suggests that the timing of conception post-surgery may not significantly impact fetal development in the early stages, challenging some assumptions prevalent in clinical guidelines.

Additionally, the study highlights that while gestational age (GA) at the malformation scan was significantly higher for women in the gastric bypass group compared to the general population, the unadjusted GA at delivery and birthweight were notably lower in this cohort. This discrepancy raises important questions about the long-term implications of gastric bypass surgery on fetal growth and development, indicating potential risks that warrant further investigation.

Moreover, the authors emphasize the importance of adhering to national guidelines that recommend close monitoring of women post-surgery, particularly concerning the assessment and supplementation of essential nutrients such as folate, iron, calcium, and vitamins A, D, K, and B12. These recommendations are crucial given that deficiencies in these nutrients can adversely affect both maternal health and fetal development.

The systematic review and meta-analysis conducted by (Akhter et al., 2019) provides a comprehensive examination of the relationship between bariatric surgery and adverse perinatal outcomes, particularly focusing on congenital anomalies and other significant complications. The authors systematically analyzed various studies, revealing that women who underwent bariatric surgery before pregnancy exhibited increased odds of perinatal mortality, congenital anomalies, preterm birth, small for gestational age (SGA), and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) admissions compared to their counterparts without prior bariatric surgery.

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A critical aspect of this review is the differentiation between the types of bariatric procedures. The authors noted that malabsorptive procedures were significantly associated with an increase in SGA infants and a decrease in large for gestational age (LGA) infants, while restrictive procedures did not show the same patterns. This distinction is crucial as it suggests that the mechanisms underlying adverse outcomes may vary significantly depending on the surgical approach employed. The authors hypothesize that malnutrition resulting from these procedures could be a contributing factor to the observed increase in adverse outcomes, which is supported by existing literature linking nutrient deficiencies to pregnancy complications.

The review also highlights the established connections between specific nutrient deficiencies and perinatal outcomes. For instance, the authors reference the well-documented association between folic acid intake and neural tube defects, along with links between iron deficiency and preterm birth, as well as calcium deficiency impacting birth weight. These insights underscore the importance of nutritional management in pregnant women who have undergone bariatric surgery, particularly given the potential for impaired nutrient transport across the placenta, which can exacerbate perinatal morbidity.

Moreover, the authors pointed out a significant gap in the literature regarding the types of congenital anomalies reported in pregnancies following bariatric surgery. The absence of subgroup analyses by type of anomaly limits the ability to draw specific conclusions about the risks associated with different congenital conditions. This limitation suggests a need for further research to better understand the specific mechanisms and risk factors contributing to these anomalies.

Another noteworthy point raised in the analysis is the potential role of glycaemic variability and postprandial hypoglycaemia, particularly following Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGB) surgery, in contributing to the increased incidence of SGA infants. This adds a layer of complexity to the discussion of perinatal outcomes,

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indicating that metabolic changes following bariatric surgery may also play a critical role.

The article "Micronutrient screening, monitoring, and supplementation in pregnancy after bariatric surgery" by (Huang et al., 2021) provides a comprehensive examination of the implications of bariatric surgery on maternal nutrition and subsequent fetal outcomes. The authors classify bariatric surgeries into three types: restrictive, malabsorptive, and a combination of both, with a focus on the latter as it presents more significant challenges in nutrient absorption. This classification is crucial, as it lays the groundwork for understanding the various nutritional deficiencies that can arise post-surgery, especially during pregnancy.

One of the key insights from the article is the impact of malabsorptive surgeries on nutrient absorption due to alterations in gastrointestinal physiology. The authors explain that procedures such as roux-en-Y gastric bypass significantly reduce the body's ability to absorb essential vitamins and minerals, primarily because of the bypassing of the duodenum and jejunum, which are critical sites for nutrient absorption. This anatomical change, combined with the physiological demands of pregnancy—such as increased blood volume and altered nutrient excretion—can exacerbate the risk of deficiencies. The article effectively highlights how these deficiencies can lead to adverse outcomes, including small for gestational age (SGA) infants, preterm births, congenital abnormalities, and increased perinatal mortality.

Moreover, (Huang et al., 2021) reference a prospective cohort study from 2014 that found a significant difference in birth weight between infants born to mothers who underwent malabsorptive versus restrictive surgeries. This finding underscores the necessity for rigorous monitoring and supplementation of micronutrients during pregnancy for women with a history of bariatric surgery. The article also discusses systematic reviews that identify a range of vitamin and mineral deficiencies prevalent among this population, such as vitamins A, B1, B6, B12, C, D, and K, as well as minerals like iron, calcium, selenium, and phosphorus. These deficiencies

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can manifest in maternal symptoms including anemia and night blindness, which further complicate the maternal-fetal health dynamic.

Despite the thorough investigation of the risks associated with micronutrient deficiencies, the authors conclude that the evidence linking these deficiencies to adverse neonatal outcomes remains inconclusive. This critical evaluation suggests a need for further research to establish clearer connections and guidelines for supplementation in this vulnerable population. The article serves as a vital resource for healthcare providers working with pregnant individuals who have undergone bariatric surgery, emphasizing the importance of tailored nutritional strategies to mitigate risks to both maternal and fetal health.

The article "Beyond Weight Loss: A Comprehensive Review of Pregnancy Management following Bariatric Procedures" by (Huluță et al., 2024) presents a thorough examination of the implications of bariatric surgery on pregnancy outcomes, particularly focusing on the potential risks and benefits for both mothers and their offspring. The authors effectively synthesize existing literature to highlight the complex relationship between maternal gastric bypass surgery and various neonatal outcomes, including birth defects.

One of the key insights from the article is the beneficial impact of bariatric surgery on reducing certain pregnancy-related complications, such as gestational diabetes and large-for-gestational-age infants, which are significant contributors to adverse neonatal outcomes. This is an important finding, as it underscores the potential of bariatric surgery to improve maternal health and, by extension, fetal development (Huluță et al., 2024). However, the authors also point out the paradoxical association observed in some studies between bariatric surgery and an increased risk of small-for-gestational-age infants and preterm births, indicating that the outcomes of bariatric surgery are not universally positive and warrant careful consideration.

The article critically evaluates the conflicting evidence regarding the association between bariatric surgery and birth defects. While retrospective studies have largely

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found no significant association, the authors acknowledge that some studies have reported an increased risk, particularly for heart and musculoskeletal defects. This nuanced discussion is vital, as it reflects the ongoing debate in the field regarding the multifactorial nature of birth defects, where obesity itself is a recognized risk factor (Huluță et al., 2024). The authors emphasize the importance of distinguishing between the effects of bariatric surgery and the underlying conditions of obesity, which complicates the interpretation of existing data.

Moreover, the article highlights the role of nutritional factors, particularly the intake of folic acid and vitamin B12, in mitigating risks associated with bariatric surgery during pregnancy. The authors note that adequate folic acid intake is critical for preventing neural tube defects, and vitamin B12 is essential for neurological development, especially in patients who have undergone malabsorptive procedures. This information is particularly relevant for healthcare providers managing pregnancies in women with a history of bariatric surgery, as it underscores the necessity of vigilant nutritional monitoring and supplementation (Huluță et al., 2024)

CONCLUSION

The literature surrounding maternal gastric bypass surgery and its association with offspring birth defects presents a multifaceted view of maternal and fetal health outcomes. The initial study by (Nikoline Nørgaard et al., 2014) indicates that while the surgery-to-conception interval does not significantly affect early fetal growth metrics, there are concerns regarding maternal health, particularly related to gestational age at malformation scans. This finding suggests that while immediate impacts on fetal growth may be minimal, longer-term implications warrant attention.

A systematic review and meta-analysis by (Akhter et al., 2019) builds upon these findings, highlighting the increased risk of adverse perinatal outcomes, including congenital anomalies and perinatal mortality, particularly in women undergoing malabsorptive procedures. This underscores the critical relationship between

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maternal nutritional deficiencies and fetal development, reinforcing the necessity for rigorous monitoring and intervention during pregnancy.

The work of (Huang et al., 2021) further emphasizes the importance of micronutrient screening and supplementation for women post-bariatric surgery. The analysis reveals how specific nutrient deficiencies can lead to severe complications, including neural tube defects, thereby highlighting the urgent need for proactive nutritional management in this population.

Moreover, the comprehensive review by (Huluță et al., 2024) synthesizes existing literature to illustrate both the benefits and risks associated with bariatric surgery. While some studies report improvements in maternal metabolic profiles and reductions in gestational complications, there remains conflicting evidence regarding the association between bariatric surgery and birth defects. This complexity is compounded by the dual role of obesity as a risk factor for birth defects, necessitating careful consideration of nutritional factors such as folic acid and vitamin B12 intake.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature collectively emphasizes the intricate relationship between maternal gastric bypass surgery and offspring birth defects, highlighting the critical role of maternal health and nutritional status. The need for vigilant monitoring and tailored nutritional strategies is paramount to optimize outcomes for both mothers and their children, given the potential risks associated with nutrient deficiencies and the complexities of bariatric surgery outcomes.

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