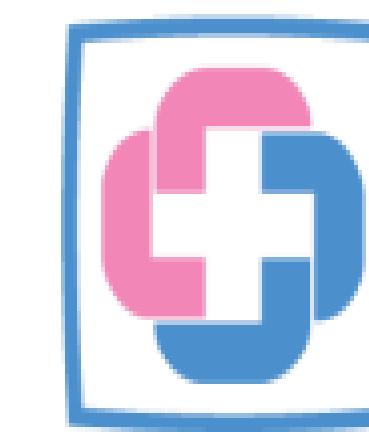


A Qualitative Study of Perinatal Drug Abuse in Singapore



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Background and Objectives

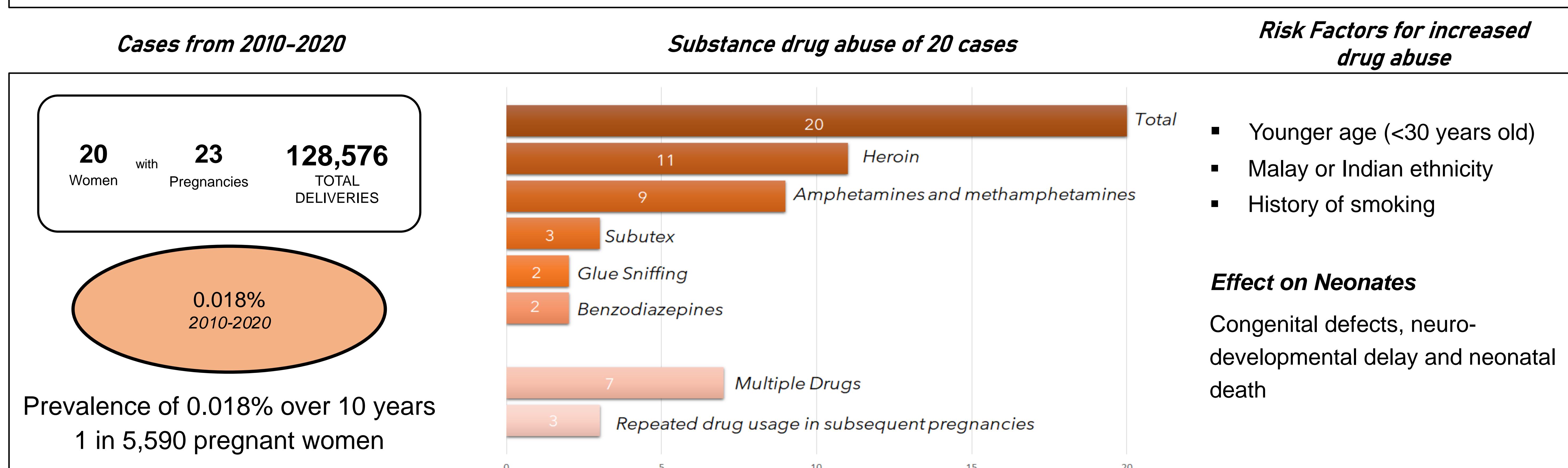
Drug use during pregnancy can have detrimental effects on pregnancy and can lead to poor child health outcomes. The exact nature and extent of the poor outcomes depend on the type of drug(s) involved. Most substances of abuse cross the placenta and can affect fetal brain development with long-lasting implications for brain structure and function. Pregnant drug abusers tend to have little to no proper prenatal care and are at higher risks of poor maternal and neonatal outcomes. There is currently limited information available on the prevalence and risk factors of drug abuse in pregnant women in Singapore. The objectives of this qualitative study are to establish (1) the prevalence of drug abuse among pregnant women in Singapore, and (2) the risk factors for drug abuse during pregnancy.

Methodology

A perinatal audit and review of management of cases of substances abuse in pregnancy from 2010 to 2020 was performed. Case records of substance drug abuse (excluding alcohol and tobacco) over the last 10 years from 2010 - 2020 were sourced via ICD 10 Diagnosis extracted from the medical records registry. Essential demographic data such as age, race, gestation age, previous pregnancies, past medical history and history of substance drug use, obstetric and neonatal outcomes were subsequently collected and compiled.

Results

There was a total of 20 women with perinatal drug abuse between 2010 and 2020. Three of the 20 women engaged in drug abuse for 2 of their pregnancies each, making 23 pregnancies affected by substance abuse during this period. The prevalence of substance abuse among pregnant women was 0.018% (23/128576) or 1 in 5,590 pregnant women. The most common substance abuse in pregnancy was heroin with 11 cases (55.0%). High-risk factors for the pregnant substance abuser were younger age < 30 years old, Malay or Indian ethnicity, history of smoking. In general, pregnant drug abusers booked in late in their pregnancies, tended to have little to no proper prenatal care and defaulted their pregnancy follow-ups.



Discussion and Future Plans

- Commendable efforts by CNB to reduce rates of substance abuse in Singapore, resulting in very low rates of drug abuse in pregnancy.
- Paramount to incorporate public and patient education to mitigate potential risks.
- Early intervention and initiation of appropriate support services are important.
- Need for a multidisciplinary approach for prevention and management of substance abuse in pregnancy.

Epidemiological trends include

- Women with substance drug abuse are:
- More likely to book late in pregnancy, have frequent hospital admissions but defaulted outpatient follow-up
 - Lack proper antenatal care
 - Have strained family and marital relationships
 - Have multiple marriages with children from different marriages
 - Experience financial hardships

Future Directions

