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An examination of differences in pregnancy outcomes for women with and without disabilities

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Abstract

There are approximately 4.7 million women of child-bearing age with disabilities in the US. Although pregnant women with disabilities are exposed to a quadruple health care disadvantage, there is very little research-based evidence that could be useful in guiding policy and practice in this area. The purpose of this study is to contribute evidence from PRAMS data toward closing this gap.

Approach

The study uses 2010 Prams data from the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island to analyze mean differences in pregnancy outcome for women with and without disabilities. The study also conducts a multivariate analysis of the differences controlling for factors other than disability that could affect pregnancy experiences and outcomes.

Results

The study finds statistically significant (p=.001) differences in pregnancy outcomes for women with and without disabilities. Relative to women without disabilities, women with disabilities have a significantly higher likelihood of: premature birth, low birth weight, babies being in intensive care or dead. However, there are no significant differences in the likelihood of: forceps, vacuum, caesarian-section, or vaginal birth or of their babies having birth defects.

Conclusions

These differences suggest that child-bearing age women with disabilities need closer monitoring before and during pregnancy. Therefore there is need for improved access to care.

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