Pregnant Women with OUDs

Introduction: Pregnant women have unique needs and require treatment customized to their situation. Best practices for their treatment are highlighted here.
(Excerpted from ASAM guidelines [1]
"(1) The first priority in "treating" pregnant women for opioid use disorder should be to identify emergent or urgent medical conditions that require immediate referral for clinical evaluation.
(2) A medical examination and psychosocial assessment is recommended when evaluating pregnant women for opioid use disorder.
(3) Obstetricians and gynecologists should be alert to signs and symptoms of opioid use disorder. Pregnant women with opioid use disorder are more likely to seek prenatal care late in pregnancy, miss appointments, experience poor weight gain, or exhibit signs of withdrawal or intoxication.

(4) [*As with all patients with OUDs,*] psychosocial treatment is [*strongly*] recommended in the treatment of pregnant women with opioid use disorder.

(5) Counseling and testing for HIV should be provided in accordance with state law. Tests for hepatitis B and C and liver function are also suggested. Hepatitis A and B vaccination is recommended for those whose hepatitis serology is negative.

(6) Urine drug testing may be used to detect or confirm suspected opioid and other drug use with informed consent from the mother, realizing that there may be adverse legal and social consequences of her use. State laws differ on reporting substance use during pregnancy. Laws that penalize women for use and for obtaining treatment serve to prevent women from obtaining prenatal care and worsen outcomes.

(7) Pregnant women who are physically dependent on opioids should receive treatment using methadone or buprenorphine mono-product rather than withdrawal management or abstinence.

(8) Care for pregnant women with opioid use disorder should be co-managed by an obstetrician and an addiction specialist physician. Release of information forms need to be completed to ensure communication among healthcare providers.

(9) Treatment with [*buprenorphine or*] methadone *[(within a licensed Opioid Treatment Program)*] should be initiated as early as possible during pregnancy.

(10) Hospitalization during initiation of methadone and treatment with buprenorphine may be advisable due to the potential for adverse events, especially in the third trimester.

(14) Clinicians should be aware that the pharmacokinetics of [*buprenorphine*] are affected by pregnancy….Increased or split doses may be needed as pregnancy progresses. After child birth, doses may need to be adjusted.

(15) Buprenorphine monoproduct is a reasonable and recommended alternative to methadone for pregnant women. Whereas there is evidence of safety, there is insufficient evidence to recommend the combination buprenorphine/ naloxone formulation.

(16) If a woman becomes pregnant while she is receiving naltrexone, it is appropriate to discontinue the medication if the patient and doctor agree that the risk of relapse is low. If the patient is highly concerned about relapse and wishes to continue naltrexone, she should be informed about the risks of staying on naltrexone and provide her consent for ongoing treatment. If the patient wishes to discontinue naltrexone, but then reports relapse to opioid use, it may be appropriate to consider treatment with methadone or treatment with buprenorphine.

(17) Naloxone is not recommended for use in pregnant women with opioid use disorder except in situations of life-threatening overdose.

(18) Mothers receiving methadone and buprenorphine monoproduct for the treatment of opioid use disorders should be encouraged to breastfeed.

(19) [*Naltrexone may be appropriate for a mother after delivery who is capable of detoxification and at risk of relapse.*]

Methadone Versus Buprenorphine

The discussion and decision for medication should be reviewed with the patient and documented in her chart. For women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, opioid agonist treatment with methadone or buprenorphine is seen as the most appropriate treatment, taking into consideration effects on the fetus, neonatal abstinence syndrome, and impacts on perinatal care and parenting of young children. Methadone is the accepted standard of care for use during pregnancy; however, buprenorphine monoproduct is a reasonable alternative and also has some advantages over methadone. Infants born to mothers treated with buprenorphine had shorter hospital stays (10 vs. 17.5 days), had shorter treatment durations for neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) (4.1 vs. 9.9 days), and required a lower cumulative dose of morphine (1.1 vs. 10.4 mg) compared to infants born to mothers on treatment with methadone.

Combination Buprenorphine/Naloxone

There is some evidence suggesting that buprenorphine/ naloxone is equivalent in safety and efficacy to the monoproduct for pregnant women. At present, however, this evidence is insufficient to recommend the combination buprenorphine/naloxone formulation in this population."

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