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EFFECT OF LOW LEAD EXPOSURE ON GESTATIONAL AGE, BIRTH WEIGHT AND PREMATURE RUPTURE OF THE MEMBRANE

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Abstract

Lead pollution from cosmetics remains a significant public health problem not only to men at work but to women using lead containing cosmetics. The aim of this study is to find out the effect of prenatal exposure to low lead from cosmetics on gestational age, premature rupture of the membrane and birth weight. The study was carried out in the mountainous Aseer region, Southwest of Saudi Arabia where the air is thought to be clean and free of lead pollution due to the absence of petroleum smelting and other heavy industries. The region is famous as a holiday resort for tourists from Arabia and the gulf countries. All 176 pregnant women included in the study were of singleton pregnancies of gestational age 27 weeks or more who attended the antenatal outpatient clinic of the main maternity hospital. On the day of delivery 4 milliliters of venous blood from each singleton parturient was placed in a heparinized non-silica containing tube and stored at -20°C prior to analysis. In premature rupture of the membrane a total of 127 women with maternal blood lead levels above and below 200 mg/L and 150 mg/L, no significant differences (P=0.64) in these lead levels. Ninety-four (70.1%) women out of 134 have maternal blood lead concentration < 200 μg/L and only 40 women have > 200 μg/L, the mean difference in gestational age is 10.5 days, showing a non significant difference (P=0.152). Ninety-three women (72.7%) out of a total of 128 who have blood lead concentration <200 mg/L gave birth to infants weighing an average of 2.87 kg while 35 women who have blood lead level > 200 mg/L gave birth to infants weighing an average of 2.99 kg. The mean difference is 0.12 kg which is non-significant (P=0.261). The Chi-square test of the relationship between the birth weight (kg) and the levels of blood lead above and below 200 mg/L was not significant while the relationship between the birth weight (kg) and the levels of blood lead above and below 150 mg/L resulted in very slight differences in the values of infants' birth weight. It is concluded that the detected low lead exposures do not produce statistically significant effects on the above three pregnancy outcome. However, the importance of low lead exposure from the 100% lead sulfide eye cosmetic "kohl" is emphasized.

Keyword : lead, exposure, gestational, age, birth, weight, premature, rupture, of, the, membrane,

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