

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PREGNANT WOMEN WITH EPILEPSY. A PROSPECTIVE, MULTI-CENTER STUDY IN POLAND 2000-2001

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Summary

Introduction. Most studies of women with epilepsy focus on the effects of antiepileptic drugs on the course of pregnancy and the well-being of the child. Studies conducted on large samples of this group of women, aimed at determining their characteristic features, are lacking.

Objective. To present demographic data and characteristic features of pregnant women with epilepsy and to compare them with other women with epilepsy and non-epileptic women of reproductive age.

Material and method. The data were collected during a prospective, multi-center questionnaire study conducted over a period of 12 months (2000/2001). The data of 1 268 reproductive-age women (aged 17-40) were submitted to further analysis. 60 of these women (4.7%) were pregnant. The data for these women were compared with the data for the other women with epilepsy and for the general population of women (according to Statistical Yearbook).

Results. The birth rate for the general population in Poland in 2000 was 5.07%. The largest proportions of pregnant women with epilepsy were 19-22 years old (31.6%) and 31-32 years old (26.7%). More than half of the pregnant women with epilepsy were working compared with 29.1% of the remaining women with epilepsy; 26.8% of the women with epilepsy were studying compared with only 8.5% of the pregnant women with epilepsy ($\chi^2 = 15.6$, $p < 0.0015$). More pregnant women with epilepsy had higher or secondary education (13.3% and 65% respectively) compared with the other women with epilepsy (7.8% and 51.8% respectively) ($\chi^2 = 9.05$, $p < 0.25$). In the general population 15.3% of pregnant women have higher education. Most of the pregnant women had one type of seizure: partial-complex (38.1%), tonic-clonic (48.8%) and partial simple (8.3%). Seizure frequency in pregnant women was comparable to the seizure frequency for the remaining women ($\chi^2 = 9.09$, $p = \text{ns.}$). More pregnant women than other women with epilepsy were in monotherapy (73.3% and 53.8% respectively; $\chi^2 = 11.38$, $p = 0.003$) and more pregnant women than other women with epilepsy had remissions (48.3% vs 33.9%; $\chi^2 = 7.70$, $p < 0.007$). Also, compared with other women with epilepsy, pregnant women with epilepsy reported other medical conditions less frequently (26.6% vs. 11.7%; $\chi^2 = 7.70$, $p < 0.007$).

Conclusions. Pregnant women with epilepsy were more educated than other women and were more likely to be working despite their comparable number of seizures. They were also more likely to be in monotherapy and to have remissions. They reported less frequently comorbidity.

Key words: Epilepsy – Pregnancy – Epidemiology – Treatment – Remissions