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A Descriptive Comparative Study of Maternal Risk, Maternal-Fetal Medicine Services, Delivery and Birth Outcomes for High-Risk Pregnant Rural Women: A Pilot Study

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Introduction: 
The purpose of this pilot study is to describe maternal demographics and risk factors, maternal-fetal medicine (MFM) services, and delivery, birth, and cost outcomes for a sample of high-risk pregnant women living in one rural area of Georgia. Little is known about this particular population, the MFM services they receive, or their delivery or birth outcomes. The purpose of this descriptive design is to provide a picture of a situation as it naturally occurs (Burns & Grove). No manipulation of variables is involved and no hypotheses are tested.

Method(s): 
This is a descriptive, comparison study with a convenience sample of two naturally occurring groups of women residing in one rural county in Georgia: A study group of high-risk pregnant women referred by a generalist obstetrician to MFM services between October 1, 2005 and September 30, 2006 (n ~ 52) and a comparison group of high-risk pregnant women from the same obstetrician’s practice from October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005 who would have received MFM services had they been available (n~23). Data Collection: Data was obtained by manual audit of outpatient obstetric records, the MFM database, and inpatient obstetrical records. Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics were used. Percentages were computed for categorical variables. Student’s T-test was used to compare group means and the Chi-square (\(\chi^2\)) test compared proportions of categorical variables.

Results: 
Improved access to subspecialty prenatal care improved pregnancy and infant outcomes. There were significant differences between the groups in some pregnancy risks and in delivery and birth outcomes.

Discussion: 
Bringing subspecialty services to a rural population overcame access problems and impacted pregnant women and their primary care obstetrician resulting in better births and healthier infants. The mechanism of action is unclear and requires further study.

Research Completed : Yes

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