Fatigue of Chinese Mothers from Pregnancy to Postpartum

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Background

• High percentage of pregnant women experience fatigue.
• Mothers perceive higher level of fatigue in the evening than in the morning,
• The increase of fatigue level starts as early as 11-12 weeks of gestation; severity of fatigue increases by gestational months.
• Prenatal fatigue is related to depression and anxiety; number of occupational fatigue sources is related to risk of PPROM in nulliparous.
Background

• Depending on time in postpartum and survey locations, 15%-76% and 42%-76% postpartum mothers experienced fatigue and tiredness.

• Postpartum tiredness was found to relate to postpartum depression and fatigue was a strong predictor of postpartum depression.

• Trend of fatigue from pregnancy to postpartum was not understood.
Purpose

• Aimed to explore changes of fatigue level from pregnancy to postpartum and prediction of prenatal fatigue on infant prematurity.

• Research questions include
  – What are levels and changes of fatigue during and after pregnancy?
  – Can prenatal fatigue predict infant prematurity?
Design

- The study was a longitudinal design with nonprobability sampling.
- One-hundred-ninety-eight pregnant women were recruited and followed up monthly (T1: 25-30 gestational weeks, T2: 29-36 gestational weeks, T3: 34-38 gestational weeks) till 4-6 weeks postpartum (T4).
Sample

• More than half of them were primiparous (56.6%), very happy about the pregnancy (50.5%), employed (63.1%), and had an educational level higher than senior high school (68.2%).

• They had a mean age of 29.69 and were 27.37 weeks of gestation.
Instrument

- The 16-item Multidimensional Assessment of Fatigue (MAFS) was used.
- Scale score ranges from 1 to 50 with higher score indicating higher level of fatigue.
- A cutoff of 28 is used for perceived fatigue.
- Cronbach’s alpha=.95 in this study
Analysis

- Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and repeated measure ANOVA were applied.
Results

- Pregnant women did not score high on the MAFS at any time points.
- Percentage of participants experiencing fatigue increased from T1 to T4 (15.7%, 20.4%, 28.4%, and 29.8%, respectively).
- Fatigue at all survey time points were strongly intercorrelated ($r=.50-.76$).
- Repeated measure ANOVA showed a linear increasing trend of fatigue by time ($F=8.57$, $P<.001$).
- Fatigued mothers at T1 had high scores on MAFS and high rate of experiencing fatigue from T2 to T4 (56.7%, 64.5%, and 58.1%, respectively).
Results

• Prenatal fatigue at any time point was not related with age or differed by employment, education, or happy about pregnancy.
• Multiparous mothers experienced higher level of fatigue during pregnancy but not postpartum than primiparas.
• Prenatal fatigue was not related to infant birthweight.
• Prenatal fatigue was significantly but weakly correlated with baby’s gestational age.
• Fatigue at T3 was significantly but weakly correlated with APGAR scores.
Conclusion

• Active and early screening for mothers for fatigue, especially multiparas, can help healthcare professionals to prevent or manage fatigue of pregnant and postpartum women.

• More studies are needed to understand influences of prenatal fatigue on infant gestational age.
Thank you.