

## ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF HERBAL PRODUCTS AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN: A PILOT SURVEY IN TUSCANY

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*Objective.* To explore pregnant womens' attitudes, knowledge and beliefs on Alternative Drugs [ADs] (manufactured from herbs or with a natural origine) and their information sources concerning these products.

*Methods.* A pilot survey was conducted among 172 pregnant women in their third trimester of pregnancy, consecutively recruited in three obstetrical settings. Subjects were interviewed with a semi-structured questionnaire; 15 women were randomly chosen to compute a *test-to-retest* analysis.

*Results.* Response rate was 87.20%. *Test-to-retest* showed a 'very good' agreement ( $K=0.9$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) between the two interview waves. Mean age was  $32.4\pm 0.38$  years old and most women were nulliparae (62.70%). 72% of participants had a University degree. The majority of subjects (68%) declared a lifetime use of one or more ADs. During current pregnancy, 48% of subjects reported taking at least one AD. Health or sociodemographic characteristics did not differ between "users" or "non-users" of ADs, during pregnancy or not. Womens' habits to use ADs in their life entailed an higher risk to take ADs also during pregnancy; in addition 59.1% of the subjects were not able to correctly identify the type of AD they were using. The majority of women resorted to gynaecologists (32.61%) as primary information source for ADs during pregnancy, while they mainly referred to herbalists (50.43%) when not pregnant. 52% of the sample considered ADs to be safer than conventional medicines.

*Conclusions.* In the light of scanty data about ADs' safety aspects, these preliminary findings confirmed the need to explore pregnant women concerns on AD utilisation. A consuetudinary utilisation of ADs seems to be a strong predictor for AD use also during pregnancy.