Prenatal Vitamin Use in Rhode Island According to Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Participation

Allisa Georgio, Kathleen Gorman, Sarah Amin, and Brietta Oaks
University of Rhode Island

Objectives: To examine prenatal vitamin (PNV) use between Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and non-WIC pregnant women and explore food security and sociodemographic characteristics associated with each group.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among a convenience sample of Rhode Island pregnant women 18 years of age or older. Women were recruited from WIC offices, OB-GYN offices, and pregnant women known to the research team. All women that participated in the study completed an anonymous 21-question survey in-person or online that asked about PNV use, sociodemographic characteristics, and food security. We conducted t -tests and chi-square tests in this data analysis using SPSS. T-tests were used for continuous variables and chi-square was used for categorical variables.

Results: Out of 96 pregnant women, 61% were WIC participants. WIC participants were more likely to be Hispanic (47% vs 16%, \( P = 0.00 \)), identify as a race other than white (35% vs 8%, \( P = 0.02 \)), and were less likely to have a bachelor’s degree (7% vs 59%, \( P < 0.001 \)). WIC participants had a higher prevalence of food security than non-WIC participants (56% vs 27%, \( P = 0.01 \)). There was no significant difference in PNV use between WIC and non-WIC participants (\( P = 0.91 \)), with 92% of women from both groups consuming PNVs during pregnancy. However, WIC participants were more likely to obtain PNVs through a prescription than non-WIC participants (53% vs 24%, \( P = 0.003 \)).

Conclusions: This study indicates that there is high use of prenatal vitamins in both WIC and non-WIC participants, which is contrary to previous published studies on prenatal vitamin use among low-income women. In addition, we found that WIC participants are obtaining prescription prenatal vitamins more than non-WIC women. This is worth further attention as the composition of prescription and non-prescription prenatal vitamins differ.

Funding Sources: University of Rhode Island startup grant.