

Immunizing pregnant women, benefits and challenges

Litty Varghese

Senior Charge nurse, Head of Nursing Education, Department of Nursing, AHS/SEHA, UAE

Introduction: Vaccine-preventable infectious diseases are responsible for significant maternal, neonatal, and young infant morbidity and mortality. Changes in the immune response in pregnant women – which are thought to occur in order to allow the woman to tolerate the semi-allogeneic foetus – may interfere with the development of the specific immune response to pathogens. These immunological changes may alter the susceptibility of the woman and the foetus to certain infectious diseases and increase the risk of more serious outcomes. This paper discuss the benefits and challenges of immunization of pregnant women.

Immunization of pregnant women can protect them directly against vaccine-preventable infections, and in so doing potentially protect the foetus. It can also directly protect the foetus and infant via specific antibodies transferred from the mother during the pregnancy.

Pregnant women and their babies are at increased risk for influenza-related complications, including premature labour and preterm birth. Additionally, pertussis outbreaks continue to occur with infants at highest risk of severe illness and death. However, immunization coverage among pregnant women is suboptimal. Clients report concerns for the safety of vaccines and not receiving vaccine recommendations at healthcare provider visits.

Department of Health and Human services recommendation includes **Assess** the immunization status of each patient, **Recommend** the indicated vaccines to each patient, **Administer** any necessary vaccines or, if you do not stock the vaccine, **refer** the patient to a provider or location that can vaccinate the patient, **Document** the vaccinations that your patient is given, ideally in your state or local immunization registry.

Conclusion: Health care providers play a crucial role in helping keep pregnant women and their new born healthy. Assuring our patients are protected by recommended vaccines is key.