

PHACS SMARTT Protocol
Participant Summary

Title: Substance Use during Pregnancy by HIV-Infected Mothers

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Study Description: Drug use during pregnancy is dangerous for the baby. It can cause problems with growth, behavior, and learning. We wanted to find out how many mothers with HIV infection said they used drugs (legal or illegal) like alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin while they were pregnant. We asked these questions of the mothers of babies in the PHACS study. We also tested meconium from the babies enrolled in PHACS. Meconium is the first stool a baby passes in the days after birth. It only develops in the fetus around halfway through a pregnancy. So, if the test finds a drug in the meconium, this means the drug was used sometime in the second half of the pregnancy.

Study Population: There were 480 mothers in this study. They all answered the “Substance Use during Pregnancy” interview after their baby was born.

Results: Twenty-nine percent of mothers said they used some drugs while they were pregnant. Almost a quarter of women said they either drank alcohol or smoked cigarettes. Seven percent said they smoke marijuana. When we compared the drugs that were found in the meconium to the drugs mothers told us they used in the second half of their pregnancy, they did not match perfectly, but agreement was good. For example, five of the meconium samples tested positive for marijuana. Four of the mothers of the babies with these meconium samples said they used marijuana in the second half of their pregnancy. This means that the agreement between what the mothers reported and the meconium was 80%. We also found out that drug use dropped after the first trimester (first 3 months of pregnancy). This tells us that when mothers found out they were pregnant some of them stopped their drug use.

Conclusions: Most HIV-positive mothers in PHACS did not use illegal drugs while they were pregnant. Almost a quarter of mothers used either alcohol or cigarettes, which is very harmful to the baby. The answers mothers gave during their interview matched well with what the meconium tests told us.

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