Pregnant Women on the Move: Exercise Patterns and Intentions Study

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Abstract: Although there is abundant research on the benefits and risks of physical activity during pregnancy, few studies have explored the impact of pregnancy on women's behaviors or intentions related to physical activity. Furthermore, though research suggests that PA generally facilitates desired pregnancy outcomes, little is known regarding specific activity that might be most effective. The purpose of this study was to examine patterns and intentions of PA among pregnant women in rural southeast US.

Following a quantitative, cross-sectional design; participants were recruited from offices of obstetricians and pre-natal clinics($n = 89$). The majority of the sample was 56% Caucasian (56%) followed by African American (32%). Most women were in their third trimester (48%) followed by 27% in the second. Variables included the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) score, BMI, and descriptive variables.

Given a specific definition of PA, 29% of participants reported no regular exercise; 23% reported having begun regular PA during pregnancy; 16% reported continuing a habit of PA during pregnancy; and 26% reported regular PA in the past but not during pregnancy. No difference in total PA among trimesters ($p>0.05$) but significant differences were found by geographical location ($p<0.05$). Higher scores on physical activity were related to normal BMI, second trimester, and Caucasian race. Data from this study indicate various habits and intentions oward PA during pregnancy. This study represents initial efforts to explore PA in order to design effective interventions that facilitate appropriate health behaviors during pregnancy with the need for attention to BMI and race.