

Drug use in pregnancy: resources and recommendations

An article in the March 2010 issue of *Canadian Family Physician*¹ correctly identifies the *Compendium of Pharmaceuticals and Specialties (CPS)* as “the most frequently used reference for evaluating safety when prescribing medication to pregnant women in Canada.” The article, written by Law et al of the Motherisk team, might mislead readers about the content of the *CPS*. Indeed “[the *CPS*’s] contents are legal product monographs provided by the manufacturers.”¹ The product monographs include the Food and Drug Administration’s pregnancy risk categories because Health Canada requires that information; it is not a requirement of the *CPS*.

The Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) recognized the need for better information regarding the management of pregnant and breastfeeding women many years ago and has taken steps in the *CPS* and in our other publications to address this void. In addition to the manufacturer-supplied monographs, the *CPS* includes 140 nonproprietary monographs compiled by editorial staff at the CPhA. These CPhA monographs provide the best available evidence on many widely used drugs, and are peer reviewed by Canadian experts. Each CPhA monograph contains a section on pregnancy and breastfeeding; all monographs are indexed and easily identified throughout the *CPS*. The Clin-Info section includes a document authored by Motherisk physicians, which provides the principles of prescribing during pregnancy and drugs of choice during pregnancy.

Further, the CPhA publishes *Therapeutic Choices*, a peer-reviewed Canadian reference manual based on the best available evidence on treatment options for common medical conditions. The sixth print edition—tentatively set for release in the spring of 2011—will include information on pregnancy and breastfeeding in most chapters. A new section will discuss the effects of the condition on pregnancy, the effects of pregnancy on the condition, and the management of the condition during pregnancy.

Patient Self-Care, another CPhA publication for health care professionals, addresses the treatment of minor ailments and includes an appendix about the treatment of many self-care conditions in pregnancy. These articles are authored by a Motherisk specialist. The second edition of *Patient Self-Care* is due for release in August 2010.

Publications by the CPhA are also available to subscribers online at www.e-therapeutics.ca, where content is regularly updated. For example, the new pregnancy and lactation information from *Therapeutic Choices* has already been added to several topics. Other regular updates include revisions to drug monographs, new products, and Health Canada advisories.

The CPhA provides more than Health Canada-approved product monographs. Our comprehensive print and online resources represent the CPhA’s commitment to providing the most complete, accessible, and relevant drug and therapeutic information for Canadian health care professionals. We encourage our readers to look further within *CPS*, *e-CPS*, and *e-Therapeutics* when seeking relevant information regarding drug use during pregnancy.

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Reference

1. Law R, Bozzo P, Koren G, Einarsen A. FDA pregnancy risk categories and the *CPS*. Do they help or are they a hindrance? *Can Fam Physician* 2010;56:239-41.

Industry-sponsored egg supplement

I am very disappointed that a previous issue of *Canadian Family Physician (CFP)* was coupled with a supplement of the *International Journal of Clinical Practice*.¹ The supplement was supported by an “educational grant” from the Egg Farmers of Canada, the Canadian marketing agency for eggs (many of us are familiar with their “get cracking” advertising campaign), which represents a billion dollar Canadian industry.²

With this type of endorsement, *CFP* has become an advertising tool, using the sophisticated marketing technique of a medical journal as a vehicle for industry promotion. As a result, it is Canadians who will suffer confusion and ill health as they are misled into thinking that eggs are a harmless food.

The supplement was called “A Review of the Harvard Egg Study.”¹ It reviewed the egg consumption of a subpopulation in the Nurses’ Health Study from the 1980s and 1990s, which was published under the title “A Prospective Study of Egg Consumption and Risk of Cardiovascular Disease in Men and Women” in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* in 1999.³ The study’s authors were affiliated with the Harvard School of Public Health; hence, it has been dubbed the “Harvard Egg Study,” a savvy title from this industry-supported publication.

The review states that “consumption of up to seven eggs per week is congruent with a healthy diet.”¹ It further espouses that cholesterol intake is not likely a significant cause of cardiovascular disease, and questions the strength of data regarding cholesterol from the Framingham Heart Study.¹

Buried in the back of this thick supplemental issue is an article entitled “Dietary Cholesterol and Other Nutritional Considerations in People with Diabetes,”⁴ which reports that subgroup analysis of the “Harvard Egg Study” population showed egg consumption as indeed harmful to patients with diabetes, even at the low levels described in the study. Somehow, the