Health knowledge and iodine supplementation consumption among pregnant women in Gippsland, Victoria, Australia

J Martin¹, E Mitchell², G Savige²
¹Monash University, School of rural and Indigenous health, Moe, VIC
²Monash University, School of rural and Indigenous health, Moe, VIC

Objective:
To investigate iodine supplementation consumption and health knowledge among pregnant women.

Design:
A cross-sectional sample of pregnant women undertook a self-administered questionnaire (August 2011- May 2012).

Setting:
Antenatal classes and clinics from eight birthing hospitals across Gippsland.

Participants:
Pregnant women aged 18 years or older, in their third trimester and based in Gippsland (Victoria, Australia). A total of 204 participants were recruited. Four did not meet the study criteria.

Main outcome measures:
Iodine supplementation consumption; health knowledge; main sources of health information during pregnancy; predictors of iodine supplementation consumption.

Results:
46% of participants did not follow the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommendation of 150µg/day iodine supplement. The participants lacked knowledge about iodine and the need for supplementation during pregnancy. Only 18.5% of pregnant women believed they needed an iodine supplement. The majority of participants (83.5%) indicated their medical practitioners was the main source of health information, yet only 34.5% indicated being made aware of the importance of increasing iodine intake during pregnancy by their medical practitioner. The predictors of iodine supplementation are general supplementation use and knowledge of the importance of iodine.

Conclusions:
Despite NHMRC guidelines for iodine supplementation during pregnancy, many women were not taking a supplement with adequate iodine. Pregnant women may be inclined to take an iodine supplement if they had greater knowledge of their increased iodine needs despite eating a healthy diet. Medical practitioners are best placed to provide this information to pregnant women.
References: