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Protective effect of educational level on nutritional status during pregnancy

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ABSTRACT (up to 300 words)

Introduction: Socio-environmental factors can modulate nutritional status during pregnancy.

Objective: To evaluate the association between educational level (EL) and nutritional status in pregnant women in Córdoba, Argentina.

Methods: We have recently started a cohort of pregnant women residing in Córdoba, Argentina. The 89 women enrolled to date completed a sociodemographic survey. Pre-pregnancy and current nutritional status data were collected. EL (complete/incomplete high school), pre-pregnancy nutritional status (without/with overweight according to BMI -WHO classification), current nutritional status (without/with weight excess according to BMI reference Rosso-Mardones 2005) and weight gain for gestational age (appropriate/excessive increase according to National Academy of Sciences). Fisher's exact test was applied to evaluate the association between current nutritional status and EL. Binomial logistic regression models (outcome: adequate/excessive weight gain) were adjusted including EL, age and parity as covariates. All analyses were performed using Stata V17 stratifying by pre-gestational overweight.

Results: In women with pre-gestational healthy BMI, weight excess was inversely associated with EL. There was a higher percentage of women with an excessive BMI according their gestational age in those with incomplete secondary education (57.1%) compared to those with complete high school (17.07%) ($p=0.039$). On the other hand, in women with excess pre-pregnancy weight, EL was

not associated with weight excess, and the majority maintained this condition (84.8%) ($p=0.325$).

Regarding weight gain, it was observed that having complete high school was associated with a lower occurrence of excessive weight gain in pregnancy (OR 0.068 CI95% 0.007-0.641), while those women who already had pre-pregnancy weight excess EL was not associated with weight gain (OR 0.69 CI95% 0.133-3.572).

Conclusion: EL exerts a protective effect of nutritional status during pregnancy in those women who had healthy BMI. However, this protective effect in nutritional status is not enough during pregnancy in those who "track" overweight from earlier stages of life.



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