REducing the Risks of Psychiatric Teratogenic Medications

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Bipolar disorder is a chronic illness that affects 5.7 million American adults. The median age of onset for bipolar disorders is 25 years. Women with bipolar disorder have an increased vulnerability to sexual abuse and unplanned pregnancy. Unplanned pregnancy in this population is particularly problematic because the psychiatric medications used as first line treatment are also known teratogens.
PURPOSE

- To assess the rate at which women of childbearing age with bipolar disorder served at Grady Behavioral Health are being counseled in regards to teratogenic risks of psychiatric medications.
METHODOLOGY

- Literature Review
- Institutional Review Board Approval
- EPIC electronic medical record review
  - Women aged 18-45
  - Treated at Grady Behavioral Health between September 2013 and January 2014
  - Prescribed Valproate, Lithium, or Carbamazepine.
- Key Informant Interviews
FINDINGS

- 67% of women did not have documentation of risk counseling related to pregnancy.
- Key informants thought that it was “Important” and “More than likely happening” but poorly documented.
- Many patient factors were proposed as to why there was little use of contraceptives.
- A flyer was created to assist in patient awareness of the teratogenic risks.
Medication that you are taking can cause harm to a growing fetus. Do you plan to have any (more) children in the next year?

YES! How can I reduce the risk before I conceive?

1) Make an appointment to talk to your Psychiatrist about your specific needs and risk factors.
2) If you are taking Valproate or Carbamazepine begin taking 4mg of Folic Acid daily.
3) Maximize your physical health. Eat well. Exercise. Make sure your immunizations are up to date.

No. What do I need to know?

1) Almost half of all pregnancies are unplanned.
2) Depending how long you want to wait before pregnancy a long acting reversible contraceptive may be best for you.
3) Maximize your physical health. Eat well. Exercise. Make sure your immunizations are up to date.
CONCLUSION

- Even in academic medical centers work needs to be done to increase counseling in regards to teratogenic risks associated with psychiatric medications. Future work is needed to develop and refine the education tools to meet the needs of the community.

- Collaboration has begun to continue the project in the next year.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- National Medical Fellowships
- United Health Foundation
- Morehouse School of Medicine
- Grady Behavioral Health
- Dr. Glenda Wrenn
REFERENCES