Elevated perceptions of teratogenic risk can cause anxiety and confusion among pregnant women. To assess whether ethnic identity and demographic factors can influence teratogenic risk perceptions, 194 pregnant women in Houston were surveyed using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) and visual analog scales to quantify perceptions of teratogenic risk for common exposures during pregnancy. Overall, participants estimated an elevated baseline risk of 25% for birth defects among the general population. In addition, participants overestimated birth defect risks for other exposures, including alcohol and marijuana. Based on the MEIM scores, ethnic identity was not significantly associated with teratogenic risk perceptions; however, some demographic factors were found to be significantly associated. Participant education level was associated with the perception of the general population risk for birth defects, influenza vaccine, and acetaminophen. Understanding how demographic factors can influence teratogenic risk perceptions can aid in providing effective and accurate counseling to patients with diverse backgrounds. This may help reduce patient anxiety, guilt, and even terminations based on misinformation.

Advisory Committee:

- Jennifer Lemons, MS, CGC, Chair
- Myla Ashfaq, MS, CGC
- Jennifer Hoskovec, MS, CGC
- Hope Northrup, MD
- Eleazar Soto Torres, MD
- Stephen Daiger, PhD