Effect of Anchoring on Perceived Amniocentesis Related Miscarriage Risk Within a Latina Population

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Most recognized pregnancies are completed without difficulty, yet there is always a 3-5% background risk to have a child with a birth defect. Amniocentesis, the most common type of prenatal diagnostic test, is used to detect chromosomal abnormalities, such as Down syndrome. Amniocentesis is associated with a risk of complications that can lead to a miscarriage, which is typically quoted to be between 1 in 300 and 1 in 500. The general population has a difficult time interpreting risks, as individuals vary in numeracy skills, as well as personal factors that can influence risk perception. A recent study by Nuccio (2010) investigated the effect of anchoring, where a patient’s prior knowledge about a subject affects her risk perception, and how it relates to the uptake of amniocentesis within a diverse population in Houston, TX. Amniocentesis uptake rates are typically lowest within the Latina community, and although the factors related to this have been studied before, no specific conclusions have been reached. The effect of anchoring on perceived amniocentesis related miscarriage risk within the Latina population has not been previously examined. A two-part questionnaire was completed by 96 Latinas receiving prenatal genetic counseling due to an increased risk to have a baby with a chromosome abnormality. The genetic counselor involved in the session completed a separate survey. We found that this population was largely unfamiliar with surveys, risk figures, and prenatal testing. Most women did not feel like the information gained from an amniocentesis would change the management of their pregnancy and/or they did not believe that their baby had a problem. Overall each woman was unique and had different reasons to support her amniocentesis decision, regardless of previous experiences that may have been thought to be influential, which was similar to the findings by Nuccio (2010). Women, regardless of ethnicity, deserve individualized genetic counseling sessions that cater to their needs and wants regarding their prenatal care.

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