

Editorial

COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy

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At the heart of an unparalleled crisis of COVID-19, women in the state of pregnancy are more predisposed to this fatal condition. Pregnancy is a physiological state in which a woman's body enters a state of immunosuppression for the development of the foetus. This variation in the immune system brings a change in the response to viral infections in general, and thus in turn, can cause more serious symptoms of COVID-19. The recent research findings give an indication of the possibility of vertical transmission. It is yet to confirm the number of pregnancies affected and the clinical significance to neonates in pregnancies infected with COVID-19. The vaccination drive which is working in its full force throughout the country is now available for women during the state of pregnancy.

Research evidence advocates that the benefits of vaccination during the state of pregnancy overshadow the potential risks. The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NITAGI), MoHFW has recommended the vaccination of pregnant women against COVID-19 with the available vaccines in our country. Vaccination during pregnancy is based on the woman's choice. The guidelines from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have not mandated it yet. Presently in India, three vaccines have got approval for restricted use in an emergency situation. The vaccines include inactivated vaccine (Covaxin) and non-replicating viral vector platform (Covishield and Sputnik V).

The vaccination against COVID-19 can be opted for at any time during the pregnancy. As the vaccination during pregnancy is based on a woman's choice, to help the pregnant women in drawing an informed decision, it becomes necessary to update them about the potential benefits and the likely side effects of the vaccination. The full impact of COVID-19 on pregnancy, vertical transmission to foetus, and the effects on foetus and new-borns are still imprecise. Therefore, the pregnant women who are opting for vaccination require special considerations and continuous reporting of any adverse events following immunisation.

As current evidence lacks information regarding the AEFI (Adverse events following vaccination), the health team members including obstetricians, gynaecologists, neonatologists, midwives, nurses, and all other cadres of the health team need to be sensitised. The frontline healthcare workers need to be prepared for their role in AEFI surveillance. Vaccination against COVID-19 is recommended during pregnancy as recent evidence

indicate that pregnant women are at risk of developing severe complications if they get infected.

The health team members should create awareness that COVID-19 vaccines do not have any effect on male or female fertility. As per the recommendations of the CDC, a routine pregnancy test is not advised before COVID-19 vaccination. COVID-19 vaccination's benefits outweigh the potential risks, and this empowers pregnant women to make an informed choice regarding vaccination against COVID-19.