A Visit to the Pediatrician as a Part of Comprehensive Prenatal Care?

A survey of obstetric providers

Tiffany L. Mei, BS, C. Andrew Aligne, MD, MPH, Jessica L. VanScott, MD, MPH

1University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, Rochester, NY; 2The Hoekelman Center, Department of Pediatrics, University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, Rochester, NY

BACKGROUND

• The most recent Guidelines for Perinatal Care (2017), as established by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), state that a pregnant woman in the third trimester should be encouraged to meet with a newborn care provider.

What is the Pediatric Prenatal Visit (PPV)?

• Time for expectant parents to meet with a pediatrics and receive anticipatory guidance on topics such as breastfeeding, childhood immunizations, circumcision, newborn screening, and general newborn care.

• Discussing newborn health topics in the prenatal period tends to be more effective than in the immediate postpartum period, when women are undergoing physical, emotional, and social adjustments and may be less receptive to processing information.

• Health Outcomes and Disparities

- PPV increases timely childhood immunizations.
- 22% of expectant parents will have a PPV, and only 5% of low-income women have a PPV.
- PPVs in urban, low-income families have demonstrated increased breastfeeding, reduced emergency room visits, and better doctor-patient relationships.

RESULTS

90 (30%) completed the survey. The majority of respondents were white female obstetrician-gynecologists and practiced in a public/university setting with at least five years of experience. Only 66 (73%) respondents said they had heard of the PPV and 45 (68) said they referred their patients for a PPV. Of the 33 (95%) respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that expectant parents should find a pediatrician before a baby is born.

Referral practices differed significantly by level of training and experience: attending physicians were more likely to refer compared with residents and fellows, and providers with more than ten years of experience were more likely to refer than providers with less than ten years of experience (data not shown).

Knowledge and Understanding of the PPV

• “Just as the occasional women ‘shop’ for her OB, this might be the case as well for pediatricians. If it is indeed an actual program, I was not aware of it per se, so have not referred any patients to it.”

• “ Unsure where to refer”

• “I only know about this practice due to the pediatrician I selected for my own child, and their recommendation for a pre-birth visit.”

Attitudes about the PPV

• “This would be a great idea. I am an OB resident and we don’t interact much with the pediatric side. Would be nice if we could arrange this to be done at routine OB visits”

• “I am not sure whether the pediatric prenatal visits are reimbursed for the pediatric office. If they run a busy office, they may not have the capacity to see these ‘meet and greet’ visits”

• “I think it’s a wonderful idea to help set up our patients for success”

Practices/Barriers related to facilitating a PPV for patients

• “A lot of my patients are not educated on the subject and so don’t even know they have to pick a doctor for the baby before it’s born (like maybe they think the OBGYN will be the baby’s doctor too).”

• “Patients typically find a pediatric provider without a referral”

What’s known on this subject

The pediatric prenatal visit is an opportunity to deliver anticipatory guidance and to gather family information. Despite evidence indicating that PPVs enhance outcomes like immunization rates and breastfeeding, few expectant parents receive this service—especially in low-income and BIPOC populations.

What this study adds

Even after recent joint AAP/ACOG guidelines recommending the PPV, it appears that awareness among obstetric providers remains low. This indicates an information gap and suggests that simple educational interventions could improve utilization of PPVs.

“I didn’t know this was a recommendation, but it makes perfect sense to me”