

Covid-19 in pregnancy. (Mini-commentary on BJOG-20-0578.R1 and BJOG-20-0617)

James Thornton¹

¹Nottingham City Hospital

April 28, 2020

Two papers in this issue, on births to Covid-19 infected mothers, are important additions to this rapidly evolving literature. They are both broadly reassuring.

The paper from Lombardy, the epicentre of the pandemic in Italy, is the first detailed report of pregnancies from this large region (Ferrazzi et al. BJOG 2020 xxxx). Among 42 affected women, 19 developed pneumonia, of whom seven required oxygen and four critical care. Eighteen babies were delivered by Caesarean, although in eight the indication was unrelated to Covid-19. Three babies tested positive for SARS-COV-2. Two to women who had developed Covid-19 postnatally and had breast-fed without a mask; the presumed source was the mother. One baby who delivered vaginally and did not breast-feed, developed respiratory symptoms requiring one day's ventilation and tested positive. No mothers or babies died.

The paper from China reports SARS-COV-2 viral tests in a range of body fluids from mothers and babies with COVID-19, cared for at Renmin Hospital of Wuhan University (RHWU) (Yanting Wu et al. BJOG 2020 xxxx). This hospital appears on the Global Research Identifier Database (GRID) here <https://grid.ac/institutes/grid.412632.0>. Readers should know that the GRID database reports that RHWU has the following English aliases "People's Hospital of Wuhan University", "Hubei Provincial People's Hospital", "First Affiliated Hospital of Wuhan University", "Wuhan University Renmin Hospital" and "Hubei General Hospital". This raises the possibility that some or all of the cases may have been reported previously.

With this proviso, the detailed information that 1/9 stool samples, 0/13 vaginal samples, and 1/3 breast milk samples were positive is important. Of the five babies who have delivered, none tested positive for Covid-19, although two, both preterm, had pneumonia diagnosed on chest x ray. Apart from one biochemical pregnancy in the first trimester in which a serum human chorionic gonadotrophin of 25.9 IU/L reverted to negative, no mothers or babies died.

Taken together with other accumulating data, it is already clear that Covid-19 is less severe in pregnancy than the two previous coronavirus infections, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-related coronavirus (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome-related coronavirus (MERS). Nevertheless, four of the mothers from Lombardy required critical care, and there have been other reports of both mother and baby deaths in association with Covid-19. It remains an important disease in pregnancy, which should be taken seriously.

No disclosures. A completed disclosure of interest form is available to view online as supporting information.