
PREGNANCY AND NEWBORN OUTCOMES IN ROMA AND NON-ROMA POPULATIONS

Rimárová K¹, Ostro A²

¹*Institute of Hygiene, Medical Faculty, University of P. J. Šafařík, Košice, Slovak Republic*

²*2nd Gynecology and Obstetrics Clinic, Medical Faculty, University of P. J. Šafařík, Košice, Slovak Republic*

Key words: pregnancy, birth weight, Roma population

Introduction: The health parameters of the Roma minority appear to differ significantly from other population groups. Information about the health of Roma is only available from a few scientific studies, because in general the indication of ethnicity is not allowed to be entered in governmental health statistics.

Objective: The aim of this study was to compare the reproductive parameters of Roma and non-Roma populations when controlling for mother's age and socio-economic status.

Material and methods: The data from cross-sectional study (947 Roma and 2,713 Non-Roma) were derived from maternal and newborn obstetrics reports and personal mother's interview. Newborn medical reports included data about birth weight, birth length, chest and head circumference, and Apgar score. Maternal reports included reproductive parameters (e.g. type of delivery, gestation age, spontaneous abortion, mother's weight increase) as well as socio-demographic and health data (education, employment, marital status, smoking, coffee and alcohol abuse). To analyse the data t-test, linear regression and logistic regression were used. Statistical model of linear model included regression of birth weight and gestational age.

Results: Between Roma and non-Roma significant differences were found regarding reproductive characteristics. Roma had more deliveries ($p < 0.001$) and lower mother's weight increase ($p < 0.001$). Significant differences were also found regarding newborn parameters, in particular birth-weight (on average 401 grams less in Roma, $p < 0.001$), birth-length (1.30 cm less in Roma, $p < 0.001$), chest and head circumference (both $p < 0.001$). Linear regression model for low

birth weight showed as the most important social factors: education, smoking and single marital status; for low gestational age smoking, education and employment.

Conclusions: The results show great differences between Roma and non-Roma in reproductive and newborn characteristics. There still remain questions, however, about whether these differences are caused by lower socio-economic status or ethnicity – suggesting the need for developing lower birth-weight and birth-length standards for Roma.

Acknowledgments: The presented paper is part of VEGA grant 1/2316/05.