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Influence of Hypothyroidism on Pregnancy and Fetal Development: A Comprehensive Investigation of the Risks, Mechanisms and Management Strategies with Levothyroxine Sodium

Lethícia Costa Pardinho[1], Hudson Vasconcelos de Oliveira[2], Ane Beatriz Jesus Oliveira[1], Renata Barbosa Tavares[1], Eduardo Henrique Mendes Rezende[3], Murilo Dell Eugenio Costa Filho[6], Mariana Millena Pereira Ananias[1], Thayssa Souza Sandes[1], Carolina Ázara Andrade[1], Fernanda Rego da Silva[4], Isadora Pedroche Ferrari[5] and Beatriz Ferreira Ricato[5]

LITERATURE REVIEW

RESUMO

A gestação é um período crítico em que a saúde materna influencia diretamente o desenvolvimento fetal. O hipotireoidismo, uma condição caracterizada pela produção insuficiente de hormônios tireoidianos, pode ter um impacto significativo nesse processo. Investigamos os riscos, mecanismos e estratégias de manejo do hipotireoidismo na gestação, com foco na administração de levotiroxina sódica. Este tema é crucial devido aos potenciais efeitos adversos do hipotireoidismo não tratado sobre a mãe e o feto, incluindo complicações como aborto espontâneo, pré-eclâmpsia, parto prematuro e déficits no desenvolvimento neurológico do feto. Objetivo: Realizar uma revisão sistemática da literatura para analisar os efeitos do hipotireoidismo na gestação e no desenvolvimento fetal, avaliar a eficácia da levotiroxina sódica como estratégia de manejo e identificar lacunas no conhecimento para orientar futuras pesquisas. Metodologia: Utilizando o checklist PRISMA, foram pesquisadas as bases de dados PubMed, Scielo e Web of Science para artigos publicados nos últimos 10 anos. Os descritores utilizados foram "hipotireoidismo", "gestação", "desenvolvimento fetal", "levotiroxina sódica" e "manejo". Os critérios de inclusão foram estudos originais publicados em inglês, português ou espanhol que investigaram os efeitos do hipotireoidismo na gestação e no desenvolvimento fetal, bem como a eficácia da levotiroxina sódica como tratamento. Os critérios de exclusão foram estudos duplicados, revisões de literatura e estudos com amostras pequenas ou metodologias inadequadas. Resultados: Os estudos revisados destacaram os impactos do hipotireoidismo na gestação, incluindo aumento do risco de complicações obstétricas e adversidades no desenvolvimento fetal. A levotiroxina sódica demonstrou ser eficaz na normalização dos níveis hormonais maternos e na redução desses riscos, embora questões sobre dosagem e

monitoramento ainda permaneçam. São necessárias mais pesquisas para elucidar completamente os mecanismos subjacentes e otimizar as estratégias de manejo. Conclusão: O hipotireoidismo durante a gestação representa um desafio clínico significativo, mas a administração adequada de levotiroxina sódica pode mitigar muitos dos riscos associados. No entanto, é essencial um acompanhamento cuidadoso e pesquisas adicionais para melhor entender e abordar completamente os impactos dessa condição na gestação e no desenvolvimento fetal.

Palavras-chave: "hipotireoidismo", "gestação", "desenvolvimento fetal", "levotiroxina sódica" e "manejo".

ABSTRACT

Pregnancy is a critical period in which maternal health directly influences fetal development. Hypothyroidism, a condition characterized by insufficient production of thyroid hormones, can have a significant impact on this process. We investigated the risks, mechanisms and management strategies of hypothyroidism during pregnancy, focusing on the administration of levothyroxine sodium. This topic is crucial due to the potential adverse effects of untreated hypothyroidism on the mother and fetus, including complications such as miscarriage, pre-eclampsia, premature birth and deficits in the neurological development of the fetus. Objective: To conduct a systematic review of the literature to analyze the effects of hypothyroidism on pregnancy and fetal development, evaluate the effectiveness of levothyroxine sodium as a management strategy, and identify gaps in knowledge to guide future research. Methodology: Using the PRISMA checklist, the PubMed, Scielo and Web of Science databases were searched for articles published in the last 10 years. The descriptors used were "hypothyroidism", "pregnancy", "fetal development", "levothyroxine sodium" and "management". The inclusion criteria were original studies published in English, Portuguese or Spanish that investigated the effects of hypothyroidism on pregnancy and fetal development, as well as the effectiveness of levothyroxine sodium as a treatment. Exclusion criteria were duplicate studies, literature reviews and studies with small samples or inappropriate methodologies. Results: The studies reviewed highlighted the impacts of hypothyroidism during pregnancy, including an increased risk of obstetric complications and adversities in fetal development. Levothyroxine sodium has been shown to be effective in normalizing maternal hormone levels and reducing these risks, although questions about dosing and monitoring remain. More research is needed to fully elucidate the underlying mechanisms and optimize management strategies. Conclusion: Hypothyroidism during pregnancy represents a significant clinical challenge, but adequate administration of levothyroxine sodium can mitigate many of the associated risks. However, careful monitoring and

additional research are essential to better understand and fully address the impacts of this condition on pregnancy and fetal development.

Keywords: "hypothyroidism", "pregnancy", "fetal development", "levothyroxine sodium" and "management".

Instituição afiliada – UNIRV[1] , Faculdade de Saúde Santo Agostinho[2], UniEVANGÉLICA[3], FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF WEST BAHIA[4] , UNIFADRA[5] , University of Gurupi[6]
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Autor correspondente*: Lethícia Costa Pardinho;* *email: igorcsantos01@gmail.com*

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is a crucial period in a woman's life, where maternal health plays a fundamental role in fetal development. In this context, hypothyroidism emerges as an endocrine condition with potential significant impact. Hypothyroidism during pregnancy can trigger a series of obstetric complications, with the increased risk of pre-eclampsia and premature birth being a prominent concern. Furthermore, untreated hypothyroidism can directly affect fetal development, manifesting in a range of challenges, especially in the neurological domain.

One of the main concerns lies in the adverse effects of hypothyroidism on the neurological development of the fetus. Studies indicate an association between maternal hypothyroidism and cognitive and physical deficits in offspring, highlighting the critical importance of adequate thyroid function during pregnancy. Untreated hypothyroidism can lead to delays in neurological development, compromising a child's cognitive and motor skills. These effects can have long-term repercussions, influencing the child's academic performance and quality of life.

This interaction between hypothyroidism and pregnancy raises pressing questions about clinical management and the importance of appropriate intervention to protect both maternal and fetal health. By understanding the effects of hypothyroidism on pregnancy and fetal development, it is possible to implement effective management strategies to mitigate these risks. The administration of levothyroxine sodium emerges as an essential therapeutic approach, normalizing maternal hormone levels and potentially reducing complications associated with hypothyroidism during pregnancy. However, issues such as optimal dosing and adequate monitoring remain areas of continued investigation and improvement.

The management of hypothyroidism during pregnancy is a crucial concern for health professionals, aiming to ensure the well-being of both the mother and the fetus. In this context, levothyroxine sodium assumes a central role as an effective therapeutic strategy. Adequate administration of this hormone can normalize maternal hormone levels, thus reducing the risks associated with hypothyroidism during pregnancy. However, challenges arise related to optimal dosing and continuous monitoring of

hormone levels, highlighting the need for an individualized and careful approach to each case. Furthermore, despite advances in understanding the effects of hypothyroidism during pregnancy, there are still significant gaps in knowledge. Questions regarding the mechanisms underlying the impacts of hypothyroidism, as well as best clinical management practices, remain areas of active investigation. Identifying these gaps is essential to guide future research and improve strategies for managing hypothyroidism during pregnancy. Therefore, this systematic review of the literature seeks to address these issues comprehensively, providing an updated analysis of the risks, mechanisms and management strategies of hypothyroidism during pregnancy with a focus on the administration of levothyroxine sodium.

Conduct a systematic review of the literature to analyze the effects of hypothyroidism on pregnancy and fetal development, evaluate the effectiveness of levothyroxine sodium as a management strategy, and identify gaps in knowledge to guide future research.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this systematic review followed the guidelines of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) checklist. Initially, three databases relevant to the study area were selected: PubMed, Scielo and Web of Science. The search was carried out using five main descriptors: "hypothyroidism", "pregnancy", "fetal development", "levothyroxine sodium" and "management".

For the selection of studies, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. The inclusion criteria consisted of original studies published in the last 10 years, available in English, Portuguese or Spanish, which investigated the effects of hypothyroidism on pregnancy and fetal development, as well as the effectiveness of levothyroxine sodium as a treatment. Furthermore, studies that provided relevant data on the underlying pathophysiological mechanisms were considered.

On the other hand, exclusion criteria included duplicate studies, literature reviews, studies with small samples or inappropriate methodologies, as well as those that did not directly address the topic in question. Additionally, studies that did not

present results relevant to the discussion proposed in this systematic review were excluded.

The initial search resulted in a significant number of articles that were subjected to initial screening based on the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Subsequently, the selected articles were evaluated for their relevance and methodological quality, as described in the PRISMA checklist protocol, thus ensuring the selection of the most pertinent and reliable studies for the preparation of this scientific article.

RESULTS

15 articles were selected. Hypothyroidism during pregnancy can have a significant impact on maternal health and fetal development. This endocrine disorder is characterized by insufficient production of thyroid hormones by the thyroid gland, which can lead to a series of obstetric complications. For example, preeclampsia, a condition characterized by high blood pressure and protein in the urine, is more common in women with untreated hypothyroidism during pregnancy. Additionally, hypothyroidism can increase the risk of preterm birth, which in turn is associated with a range of neonatal complications, such as low birth weight and respiratory problems. These complications can negatively impact maternal and fetal health, requiring a careful, multidisciplinary approach to clinical management.

Regarding the effects on fetal development, untreated hypothyroidism during pregnancy can have serious consequences for the fetus. Thyroid hormones play a fundamental role in the neurological and physical development of the fetus, and a deficiency of these hormones can lead to a series of complications. For example, maternal hypothyroidism has been associated with an increased risk of delayed neurological development in the child, including cognitive deficits and learning problems. Furthermore, fetal hypothyroidism, which can occur in more severe cases, can lead to congenital anomalies such as cardiac anomalies and intrauterine growth retardation. Therefore, it is essential to diagnose and treat hypothyroidism during pregnancy to protect the health and proper development of the fetus.

Administration of levothyroxine sodium is a common therapeutic strategy for the

treatment of hypothyroidism during pregnancy. This medication, a synthetic form of the thyroid hormone T4, is often used to normalize maternal hormone levels and minimize the risks associated with hypothyroidism in pregnancy. Levothyroxine sodium is administered orally and works by replacing natural thyroid hormones that the body cannot produce in sufficient quantities. Its use during pregnancy is considered safe and effective when prescribed and monitored appropriately by qualified health professionals. However, it is important to note that the ideal dosage of levothyroxine sodium may vary depending on the severity of hypothyroidism, the patient's body weight, and other individual factors. Therefore, dosage adjustment and regular monitoring of hormone levels are essential to ensure treatment effectiveness and prevent complications.

One of the challenges faced in the management of hypothyroidism during pregnancy is determining the ideal dosage of levothyroxine sodium. The recommended dose can vary significantly between patients, and is influenced by factors such as the stage of pregnancy, the severity of hypothyroidism and the presence of other medical conditions. Furthermore, the individual response to the medication may be different, which requires a personalized approach for each case. Regular monitoring of maternal hormone levels is essential to assess the effectiveness of treatment and make dosage adjustments as necessary. This may involve periodic blood tests to measure levels of thyroid hormones, such as TSH (thyroid-stimulating hormone) and free T4. With a careful approach and adequate monitoring, it is possible to achieve a healthy pregnancy and minimize the risks associated with hypothyroidism.

Monitoring maternal hormone levels is a crucial step in managing hypothyroidism during pregnancy. This practice allows you to evaluate the effectiveness of levothyroxine sodium treatment and make dosage adjustments as necessary to ensure that hormone levels are within the appropriate range. Generally, monitoring involves periodic blood tests to measure levels of thyroid hormones, such as TSH (thyroid-stimulating hormone) and free T4. These tests are performed regularly throughout pregnancy, especially during the first trimester, when there is a greater hormonal demand to support fetal development. Furthermore, monitoring maternal hormone levels is important after birth, as hypothyroidism may persist or develop after the end of pregnancy.

The frequency of monitoring may vary depending on the severity of hypothyroidism and individual response to treatment. In more serious cases or in high-risk pregnancies, blood tests may be performed more frequently to ensure adequate control of the condition. Furthermore, it is essential that monitoring is carried out by qualified healthcare professionals, such as obstetricians and endocrinologists, who can interpret test results and adjust treatment as necessary. With regular monitoring and an individualized approach, it is possible to guarantee a healthy pregnancy and minimize the risks associated with hypothyroidism.

An important aspect to consider in the management of hypothyroidism during pregnancy is the potential adverse effects of treatment with levothyroxine sodium. Although this medication is generally well tolerated, some patients may experience unwanted side effects, especially if the dosage is not adjusted correctly. Possible adverse effects include heart palpitations, tremors, excessive sweating and nervousness. In rare cases, inappropriate use of levothyroxine sodium can lead to more serious complications, such as cardiac arrhythmias or osteoporosis. Therefore, it is essential that patients are closely monitored during treatment so that any side effects can be identified and treated early, thus ensuring the safe and effective management of hypothyroidism during pregnancy.

In addition to the potential adverse effects of treatment, understanding the pathophysiological mechanisms underlying hypothyroidism during pregnancy is essential to guide clinical management. Hypothyroidism can affect a variety of physiological systems and processes in the maternal and fetal organism, including basal metabolism, hormonal regulation and neurological development. Thyroid hormone deficiency can interfere with the production and release of other important hormones, such as gonadotropic and adrenocorticotropic hormones, thus affecting the normal functioning of the reproductive and endocrine system. Furthermore, thyroid hormones play a crucial role in fetal neurological development, influencing the maturation of the central nervous system and the formation of neuronal synapses. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms by which hypothyroidism affects pregnancy and fetal development is essential to ensure effective management and minimize the risks associated with this condition.

An important consideration related to hypothyroidism during pregnancy is its potential long-term impact on the child's health. Studies have shown that untreated maternal hypothyroidism can result in complications that persist beyond the gestational period, affecting the child's development and health throughout life. For example, children born to mothers with untreated hypothyroidism may be at greater risk of developing neurological disorders, such as cognitive deficits and learning problems. Additionally, maternal hypothyroidism has been linked to an increased risk of childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes, and other chronic health conditions. Therefore, it is essential that hypothyroidism during pregnancy is diagnosed and treated early in order to protect not only the health of the mother, but also the future development and well-being of the child.

Furthermore, effective management of hypothyroidism during pregnancy requires a multidisciplinary approach, involving a variety of healthcare professionals. Obstetricians, endocrinologists, nurses and other members of the medical team must work together to ensure that the pregnant woman receives adequate monitoring and treatment. For example, the obstetrician is responsible for monitoring the progress of pregnancy and providing comprehensive prenatal care, while the endocrinologist specializes in diagnosing and treating hormonal disorders, including hypothyroidism. Furthermore, nurses play a fundamental role in educating pregnant women about the importance of treatment and in coordinating care between different health professionals. This collaborative and multidisciplinary approach is essential to ensure a healthy pregnancy and minimize the risks associated with hypothyroidism.

A crucial issue to be considered in the context of hypothyroidism during pregnancy is the need for additional research to fill existing gaps in knowledge. Despite significant advances in understanding the effects of hypothyroidism on pregnancy and fetal development, there are still unresolved questions and areas that require further investigation. For example, the pathophysiological mechanisms underlying the impacts of hypothyroidism during pregnancy have not yet been fully elucidated, and more research is needed to better understand these processes. Furthermore, additional studies are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of different treatment approaches, such as the optimal dosage of levothyroxine sodium and the influence of genetic and environmental factors on treatment response.

Another important aspect that deserves investigation is the development of specific management guidelines and protocols for different subgroups of patients. For example, women with pre-existing hypothyroidism may have different needs than pregnant women with hypothyroidism diagnosed during pregnancy. Therefore, it is essential to conduct studies that evaluate the efficacy and safety of different management strategies in different patient populations. Additionally, future research could focus on identifying early biomarkers for hypothyroidism during pregnancy, which could improve diagnosis and allow for early interventions to prevent complications. In short, continued research is critical to improving the understanding and management of hypothyroidism during pregnancy and ensuring better outcomes for pregnant women and their babies.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the studies reviewed highlight the importance of careful management of hypothyroidism during pregnancy, emphasizing its potential impacts on maternal health and fetal development. The results indicate that untreated hypothyroidism can increase the risk of obstetric complications, such as pre-eclampsia and premature birth, and negatively affect the neurological and physical development of the fetus. Adequate administration of levothyroxine sodium appears as an effective therapeutic strategy to normalize maternal hormone levels and minimize the risks associated with hypothyroidism during pregnancy. However, further studies are needed to fully elucidate the underlying pathophysiological mechanisms and determine the optimal dosage of this hormone during pregnancy.

Furthermore, research indicates the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to the management of hypothyroidism during pregnancy, involving obstetricians, endocrinologists and other health professionals. Regular monitoring of maternal hormone levels is essential to ensure the effectiveness of treatment and avoid complications. Raising awareness among pregnant women about the condition and adopting a healthy lifestyle are also relevant aspects to be considered. Finally, more research is needed to fill existing gaps in knowledge and develop specific management guidelines for different patient subgroups. Taken together, these conclusions highlight

the importance of addressing hypothyroidism during pregnancy in a comprehensive and individualized manner, aiming to ensure better results for pregnant women and their babies.

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