

For immediate release: Promising New Findings on Using Biologic Drugs Before and During Pregnancy

March 5, 2018 (Vancouver, BC) – Using biologic therapy to manage autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and psoriatic arthritis (PsA), before and during pregnancy is not associated with an increased risk of pre-term delivery or small-for-gestational-age (SGA) births, according to new research from British Columbia.

As inflammatory arthritis diseases are known to affect women more commonly than men, planning for pregnancy becomes an important consideration; for many women, this includes deciding whether to continue treatment. New research done by Arthritis Research Canada’s Trainee, PhD candidate and pharmacist, Nicole Tsao, supervised by Canada Research Chair in Medication Adherence and Arthritis Research Canada’s research scientist Dr. Mary De Vera, aimed to find out what impact biologic drugs have on pregnancy outcomes in women with autoimmune diseases.

In the population-based study, women with one or more autoimmune diseases who had pregnancies between January 1st, 2002 and December 31st, 2012 were analyzed. There were 6,218 women with 8,607 pregnancies who had an autoimmune disease diagnosis, of which 109 women with 120 pregnancies were exposed to biologics three months before, or during pregnancy.

The findings are reassuring for women with inflammatory arthritis who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant. The study demonstrated that biologics “are not associated with problems like preterm deliveries or having babies that are small for their gestational age, and rather, women who use biologics around the time of pregnancy or during pregnancy had similar pregnancy outcomes as women who were not using these drugs,” confirms Ms. Tsao. And, “staying on these treatments throughout pregnancy will allow [women] to maintain control of their disease.”

In the long term, researchers hope that these findings are factored into rheumatologists’ prescribing considerations and in their discussions with patients about using biologics during pregnancy.

The full study was published in the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, the number one journal in rheumatology.

About ARTHRITIS RESEARCH CANADA:

Arthritis Research Canada is the largest clinical arthritis research centre in North America. Our mission is to transform the lives of people living with arthritis through research and engagement. Led by world-renowned rheumatologist, Dr. John Esdaile, ARC's scientific team of 70 are creating a future where people living with arthritis are empowered to triumph over pain and disability. Each of the three centres in BC, Alberta and Quebec are leading research in arthritis prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and quality of life issues.

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