Associations between maternal obesity and severe maternal morbidity: Findings from the French EPIMOMS population-based study

Among women of reproductive age, obesity represents a significant health concern. In France, maternal obesity prevalence rates increased from 6.0% to 11.8% between 1998 and 2016. Increasing attention is brought to obesity during pregnancy given its association with perinatal outcomes and higher health care costs. This study, conducted as a population-based case-control study, aimed to assess “pre-pregnancy obesity as an independent risk factor for severe maternal morbidity by timing and cause.”

Overall, the study found that women experiencing severe maternal morbidity were more likely to have obesity. Pre-pregnancy obesity was found to be positively associated with overall severe maternal morbidity events as well as those occurring antepartum. This study supports the need to “carefully monitor blood pressure in obese women during pregnancy, including proper cuff size selection and placement to avoid inaccurate measurements.” The findings also point towards the “importance of reducing obesity among women of reproductive age and improving the quality of prenatal care and blood pressure monitoring” among women with obesity.