

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Maternal education predicts compliance to exercise during pregnancy

Sir,

We thank Drs Martin-Arias et al for their interest in our study.^{1,2} They are leaders on the study of the effect of exercise in pregnancy, contributing with several, large, important randomized controlled trials on this topic. Exercise during pregnancy has been shown to be associated with different benefits,²⁻⁶ including a significantly higher incidence of vaginal delivery and a significantly lower incidence of cesarean delivery, gestational diabetes mellitus and hypertensive disorders,^{2,3} and with a reduction in the incidence of preterm birth and gestational diabetes mellitus in overweight and obese pregnant women.⁴ Therefore, women with uncomplicated pregnancies should be encouraged to engage in aerobic and strength-conditioning exercises before, during and after pregnancy, as also suggested by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) guidelines.⁷

We agree with Drs Martin-Arias et al that non-compliance with the suggested exercise program is indeed the biggest barrier to reducing the well-known beneficial effects of exercise in pregnant women, as we mentioned above. We also agree with them that higher maternal education is associated with better compliance with exercise. More research is needed on interventions to increase compliance with suggested exercise programs and to spread the culture of the importance of physical activity during pregnancy to women with a lower level of education. After an accurate clinical evaluation to rule out any potential contraindications to exercise, pregnant women should be counseled that at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity, aerobic exercise per week will improve obstetric and perinatal outcomes, and is essential for a healthy pregnancy.

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