Cigarette Smoking and Drug Use as Risk Factors for Unintended Pregnancy

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Cigarette smoking and illicit drug use are the leading preventable causes of poor pregnancy outcomes. As unintended pregnancies are also associated with poor pregnancy outcomes, women who smoke cigarettes and/or use illicit drugs and have unintended pregnancies could be at even further risk of poor outcomes. The purpose of the present study was to examine the prevalence of unintended pregnancy among women who smoke cigarettes and/or use illicit drugs, and determine whether severity of use is related to unintended pregnancy. We surveyed 280 women aged 18-44 years and residing in the United States using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Cigarette smokers were significantly more likely to report ever having an unintended pregnancy than non-smokers (65% vs. 31%). Severity of cigarette smoking, quantified as the number of cigarettes smoked per day, was not significantly related to unintended pregnancy with 70% of women who smoke 10 or fewer and 60% of women who smoke more than 10 cigarettes per day reporting unintended pregnancies. Women with a lifetime history of illicit drug use were significantly more likely to report ever having an unintended pregnancy than those without a drug use history (48% vs. 34%). Severity of drug use, defined by most severe route of administration, was not significantly related to unintended pregnancy with 50% of women using by oral or nasal routes and 43% of women using by smoking or intravenous routes reporting unintended pregnancies. However, prevalence of unintended pregnancy increased with longest duration of use of any illicit drug with 38% of women using less than one year and 60% of women using more than one year reporting unintended pregnancies. Thus, women who smoke cigarettes and/or use illicit drugs may be at elevated risk of having an unintended pregnancy, underscoring the importance of preventing unintended pregnancies among cigarette smoking and/or illicit drug using women.