



# On having epilepsy during pregnancy

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# Epilepsy in pregnancy - Background

Epilepsy is a rare but lifelong chronic condition

In a 2005 Canadian representative cross-sectional study, the prevalence of epilepsy was 5.6 per 1,000 (95% CI, 5.2 – 6.0) among women and 4.4 per 1,000 in pregnant women

Why are the rates of epilepsy generally lower in pregnant women?

- Lower marriage rates
- Reproductive endocrine dysfunction secondary to ASM exposure
- Fear of birth defects secondary to ASM exposure
- Concern of increased risk of epilepsy in offspring

# Background cont'd

- ASM therapy is prevalent in 0.2 – 0.5% of all pregnant women
- It is estimated that half of these prescriptions are used for treating epilepsy
- Other indications for ASM therapy include mental health disorders, headache and neuropathic pain

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My journey...



# First pregnancy – Boston, MA

- Unplanned pregnancy at age 35
- Was switching from divalproex to lamotrigine and discovered I was pregnant at 6 weeks
- Advanced maternal care, 9 ultrasounds
- Lamotrigine then levetiracetam/lamotrigine
- One GTC sz at 24 weeks (dislocated jaw)
- Gave birth spontaneously at prematurely at 34 weeks likely due to placenta abrupta (I had pneumonia and a broken rib)

# Severen



- My daughter, Sevi was 6 lbs 5 oz at 34 weeks
- Breathing at birth, no complications except for slight jaundice
- Discharged healthy after 8 days in the NICU
- Breastfeeding discouraged
- I quickly became toxic on lamotrigine post-partum

# Second pregnancy - Boston

- 6 rounds of clomid/IUI then 3 rounds of OI/IUI at age 38
- Advanced maternal care, 12 ultrasounds
- Levetiracetam for entire pregnancy
- Two GTC szs at 18 and 26 weeks
- Induced at 37 weeks



# Finnegan



- My son, Finn was 7 lbs 13 oz at 37 weeks
- Slightly jaundiced
- Breastfeeding discouraged

# Third pregnancy - Vancouver

- 3 rounds of ICSI/IVF at age 44
- Advanced maternal care, 18 ultrasounds
- Mild gestational diabetes (insulin-dependent 18 – 32 weeks)
- Levetiracetam throughout pregnancy
- Three GTC szs at 14, 20 and 32 weeks
- Induced at 37 weeks

# Casey



- My son, Casey was 7 lbs 3 oz at 37 weeks
- No complications
- Breastfeeding supported
- Switched from levetiracetam to divalproex by IV load in hospital about two days after delivery.

# Reflections



# Personal recommendations

- Having seizures can be deadly and can affect one's ability to drive, study or find employment.
- Communication with caregivers is imperative.
  - Education is key.
  - Planned pregnancy is essential.
  - Folic acid supplementation during reproductive age is important.



Thank you much for having me!