

[J Obstet Gynaecol](#). 2005 Jul;25(5):427-31.

Teratogen risk counselling by internet: a prospective cohort study.

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Abstract

Although the internet may play a role in providing proper teratogen-risk counselling for pregnant women, the experience with this type of service has not been reported. We aimed to compare the pregnancy outcome of women counselled by the internet to women that received typically in-clinic teratogen risk counselling in the clinic. In a prospective cohort design, 1,011 patients were counselled in the clinic and 235 patients were counselled via the internet. Teratogen risk counselling was provided according with the information obtained from medical literature and specialised software. Information about pregnancy outcome (delivery, spontaneous abortion, or termination of pregnancy and major malformations) was obtained from 903 (89.3%) patients from the clinic group and 141 (60%) from the internet group. The amount of alcohol, cigarettes smoked, and millirads of X-ray were greater ($p < 0.05$) in patients counselled by internet than in clinic. The rate of deliveries, ongoing pregnancies, pregnancy terminations, and spontaneous abortions were similar between clinic and internet ($\chi^2 = 1.32$; $p = 0.7$). Of 498 babies born to mothers counselled in the clinic, major malformations were identified in 3.6%. Of 67 babies born to mothers counselled by internet, major malformations were present in 1.5% ($p = 0.6$). Teratogen-risk counselling by internet and clinic seems to have a similar efficacy in pregnancy outcome.