THE IMPACT OF TRUST IN THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM ON POSTPARTUM CONTRACEPTIVE CHOICE

PI: ANGELA DEMPSEY, MD, MPH

Delaying pregnancy after delivery in order to ensure appropriate birth spacing is important to improve maternal and infant health. In addition, helping women avoid pregnancy unless they want to become pregnant is another important public health goal. One important factor in helping women delay their next pregnancy is understanding how we can better help them adopt effective contraception after they give birth. In this study, we are seeking to better understand factors involved in the decision to adopt the most effective methods (including intrauterine devices and implants) after delivery.

We are specifically evaluating the influence of trust in the health care system and other behavioral characteristics on choice of effective contraception after delivery. Trust is defined as the belief that a doctor or health system is working in the best interest of the patient. Trust in the health care system has been found in prior research to be associated with increased patient satisfaction, acceptance of doctors’ recommendations, and improved adherence to medical treatment. Little is known about the relationship between trust and choice of contraception after delivery.

We enrolled 249 women during early prenatal care. They completed a survey when they started the study and again after delivery. These surveys gathered information about their trust in the health care system, their ability to read and understand health information, their beliefs about their own control over the health, and other aspects of their reproductive history, plans for future pregnancy, and information received from their doctors about contraception while they were pregnant.

We have found that women who had higher trust in their doctors, insurers, and hospital were more likely to choose effective contraception after delivery that had a failure rate of less than 10%. In addition, non-Hispanic Black women and those whose pregnancy was not intended were also more likely to choose effective contraception. We have not yet completed our analysis of the other possible related factors mentioned above.

This research adds important insight into factors that influence how women choose contraception after delivery. It can potentially help health care providers better understand how to assist women in making these decisions and increase the number of women opting for effective contraception after delivery. In turn, this could potentially decrease the proportion of pregnancies that are unintended and conceived within a short interval, both of which can negatively impact the health of the woman and the infant.