

Effects of Voucher-Based Incentives on Abstinence from Cigarette Smoking and Fetal Growth

Drs. Heil and Higgins and colleagues from the University of Vermont examined whether vouchers that are given contingent upon smoking abstinence during pregnancy are an effective way to decrease maternal smoking and improve fetal growth. A total of 82 smokers entering prenatal care were randomly assigned to either contingent or non-contingent voucher conditions. Vouchers exchangeable for retail items were available during pregnancy and for 12 weeks postpartum. In the contingent condition, vouchers were earned for biochemically verified smoking abstinence; in the non-contingent condition, vouchers were earned independent of smoking status. Smoking outcomes were evaluated using urine-toxicology testing and self-report. Fetal growth outcomes were evaluated using serial ultrasound examinations performed during the third trimester. Contingent vouchers significantly increased abstinence at the end-of-pregnancy (41% versus 10%) and at the 12-week postpartum point (24% versus 3%). There was significantly greater fetal growth with the contingent condition in terms of estimated weight, femur length and abdominal circumference. These results provide further evidence that abstinent-contingent vouchers can substantially decrease maternal smoking during pregnancy, and provide new evidence of positive effects on fetal health. Heil, S., Higgins, S., Bernstein, I., Solomon, L., Rogers, R., Thomas, C., Badger, and G. Lynch, M. Effects of Voucher-Based Incentives on Abstinence from Cigarette Smoking and Fetal Growth among Pregnant Women. *Addiction*, 103(6), pp. 1009-1018, 2008.