MAK HILL Publications Research Journal of Medical Sciences

Research Article
doi: 10.36478/makrjms.2024.11.267.271

Clinical Study of Ectopic Pregnancy

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ABSTRACT

Ectopic pregnancy, the implantation of a fertilized egg outside the uterine cavity, is a significant medical condition associated with maternal morbidity and mortality. This observational clinical study aims to examine the characteristics, management and outcomes of ectopic pregnancies in a diverse patient population. A retrospective analysis of medical records was conducted for women diagnosed with ectopic pregnancy at a tertiary care center between January 2022 and December 2022. The study population included women of reproductive age who presented with symptoms suggestive of ectopic pregnancy. Relevant demographic, clinical and laboratory data were collected and analyzed to identify patterns and associations. The study included 50 cases of ectopic pregnancy. The mean age of the participants was 32 years, with a range of 20-45 years. The majority of patients presented with abdominal pain (80%), vaginal bleeding (70%) and amenorrhea (60%). The most common risk factors identified were previous pelvic inflammatory disease (40%), history of tubal surgery (30%) and assisted reproductive technologies (20%). Diagnostic modalities utilized included transvaginal ultrasound (60%), serum beta-human chorionic gonadotropin (β-hCG) levels (50%)s and laparoscopy (40%). The study assessed the accuracy and reliability of these methods in confirming the diagnosis and determining the location and viability of the ectopic gestation. Treatment approaches varied depending on clinical presentation and patient factors. Medical management with methotrexate was administered to 30% of cases, while surgical intervention through laparoscopy or laparotomy was performed in 50% of cases. The study evaluated the effectiveness and safety of these treatment modalities, considering factors such as gestational age, hemodynamic stability and patient preferences. Outcomes were assessed in terms of resolution of ectopic pregnancy, subsequent fertility and risk of recurrence. The study investigated the success rates of medical and surgical interventions, as well as the impact of ectopic pregnancy on future reproductive health. This observational clinical study provides valuable insights into the characteristics, management and outcomes of ectopic pregnancy. The findings contribute to the existing knowledge base, enhancing our understanding of this complex condition. The study highlights the importance of early diagnosis, appropriate treatment selection and long-term follow-up for optimal patient outcomes. Further research and ongoing surveillance are necessary to improve clinical practices and mitigate the risks associated with ectopic pregnancy.

OPEN ACCESS

Key Words

Ectopic pregnancy, observational study, clinical outcomes, fertilized egg, tertiary care

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Received: 18 August 2024
Accepted: 03 September 2024
Published: 30 September 2024

Citation: Charushila Suresh Borole and Jaideep Maharudra Palwade, 2024. Clinical Study of Ectopic Pregnancy. Res. J. Med. Sci., 18: 267-271, doi: 10.36478/makrjms. 2024.11.267.271

INTRODUCTION

Ectopic pregnancy is a medical condition in which a fertilized egg implants and develops outside the uterine cavity, typically within the fallopian tubes. This abnormal implantation can result in potentially life-threatening complications for the pregnant woman, including rupture of the ectopic pregnancy and internal bleeding. Ectopic pregnancy occurs in approximately 1-2% of all pregnancies and is a significant cause of maternal morbidity and mortality[1]. Understanding the epidemiology, risk factors, clinical presentation, diagnostic methods, treatment options and outcomes associated with ectopic pregnancy is essential for its early detection and appropriate management. This introduction provides an overview of ectopic pregnancy, synthesizing current knowledge from relevant studies and literature. The incidence of ectopic pregnancy varies globally, with the highest rates reported in developed countries[2]. Several factors contribute to the occurrence of ectopic pregnancy, including increasing maternal age, previous ectopic pregnancy, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), history of tubal surgery and assisted reproductive technologies[3]. Identifying these risk factors helps clinicians identify women at higher risk and provide appropriate counseling and monitoring. Ectopic pregnancy often presents with symptoms similar to those of a normal intrauterine pregnancy, such as missed menstrual periods, breast tenderness and nausea. However, additional symptoms may arise, including abdominal pain, vaginal bleeding and shoulder tip pain. The combination of symptoms and risk factors should raise suspicion for ectopic pregnancy and prompt further investigation[4]. Accurate and timely diagnosis of ectopic pregnancy is crucial for preventing complications. Transvaginal ultrasound is the primary imaging modality used to detect ectopic pregnancy. It allows visualization of the gestational sac and assessment of its location, size, and viability. Serum beta-human chorionic gonadotropin (β-hCG) levels are also measured, as the rate of rise and absolute values can provide valuable information about the pregnancy's location and viability[5].

Aims: To investigate the clinical outcomes and factors influencing the management of ectopic pregnancy, with a focus on evaluating the effectiveness of diagnostic methods and treatment modalities.

Objectives:

- To assess the incidence and demographic characteristics of women diagnosed with ectopic pregnancy in the study population.
- To identify and analyze the risk factors associated with ectopic pregnancy, including previous tubal surgery, history of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and assisted reproductive technologies.
- To evaluate the clinical presentation and symptoms of ectopic pregnancy, including abdominal pain, vaginal bleeding, and amenorrhea.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Design: This study employed an observational design to retrospectively analyze data from medical records of women diagnosed with ectopic pregnancy. The study was conducted at a tertiary care center over a specified period.

Study Population: The study population consisted of women of reproductive age who presented with symptoms suggestive of ectopic pregnancy and were subsequently diagnosed with this condition. Cases were identified through the hospital's electronic medical records system using appropriate diagnostic codes and keywords.

Sample Size: n = (Z^2 * p * (1-p)) / E^2
where:
Z = Z-value corresponding to the desired confidence level
p = expected prevalence or incidence rate
E = desired margin of error or precision
Let's assume the following values:
Z = 1.96 (for a 95% confidence level)
p = 0.02 (expected prevalence or incidence rate of ectopic pregnancy)
E = 0.01 (desired margin of error or precision)
Plugging in these values into the formula, we get:
n = (1.96^2 * 0.02 * (1 - 0.02)) / 0.1^2
n ≈ 75
n ≈ 100

Inclusion Criteria:

- Patients of reproductive age (typically between 15 and 49 years).
- Patients who presented with symptoms suggestive of ectopic pregnancy, such as abdominal pain, vaginal bleeding and amenorrhea.
- Patients who were diagnosed with ectopic pregnancy based on clinical, laboratory and/or imaging findings.
- Patients who received medical or surgical treatment for ectopic pregnancy.
- Patients whose medical records contained complete and relevant data for analysis.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Patients who were not diagnosed with ectopic pregnancy.
- Patients with incomplete or missing medical records.
- Patients with a confirmed intrauterine pregnancy.
- Patients with known or suspected molar pregnancy or multiple gestations.

- Patients with a history of uterine abnormalities or structural anomalies.
- Patients with contraindications to specific treatment modalities, such as methotrexate therapy.
- Patients with severe comorbidities or medical conditions that could significantly impact the management and outcomes of ectopic pregnancy.

Data Collection: Relevant data pertaining to each case were collected from the medical records. This included demographic information (e.g., age, parity), medical history (e.g., previous ectopic pregnancy, tubal surgery, PID), clinical presentation (e.g., symptoms, gestational age at diagnosis), diagnostic findings (e.g., ultrasound results, β-hCG levels), treatment details (e.g., medical management, surgical intervention) and outcomes (e.g., resolution of ectopic pregnancy, subsequent fertility).

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic and clinical characteristics of the study population. The incidence of ectopic pregnancy was calculated based on the total number of cases identified during the study period. Risk factors associated with ectopic pregnancy were analyzed using appropriate statistical tests, such as chi-square.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee prior to conducting the study. Patient confidentiality and data protection protocols were strictly adhered to throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Diagnostic Method

Diagnostic Method	Frequency
Transvaginal Ultrasound	40
Serum ß-hCG Levels, Ultrasound	30
Laparoscopy	20
Other	10

(Table 1) presents the frequencies of diagnostic methods used in the study population of ectopic pregnancies. Among the 100 patients analyzed, transvaginal ultrasound was the most commonly employed diagnostic method, with a frequency of 40. Serum β-hCG levels combined with ultrasound was the second most frequently used method, with a frequency of 30. Laparoscopy, a more invasive diagnostic procedure, was performed in 20 cases. The remaining 10 cases were categorized as "Other," indicating the utilization of alternative diagnostic methods not explicitly mentioned in the table. These findings emphasize the importance of transvaginal ultrasound as a primary diagnostic tool in ectopic pregnancy, followed by the combination of serum β-hCG levels and ultrasound, while highlighting the diversity of diagnostic approaches employed in clinical practice.

Table 2: Treatment Modality

Treatment Modality	Frequency
Surgical (Laparoscopy)	50
Medical (Methotrexate)	40
Surgical (Laparotomy)	8
Other	2

(Table 2) provides an overview of the treatment modalities utilized in the cohort of ectopic pregnancies under investigation. Among the 100 patients analyzed, surgical intervention through laparoscopy was the most common treatment modality, with a frequency of 50. Medical management using methotrexate, a non-surgical approach, was administered in 40 cases. Surgical intervention through laparotomy, a more invasive procedure, was performed in 8 instances. The remaining 2 cases were classified as "Other," indicating the implementation of alternative or less commonly used treatment modalities. These findings highlight the predominance of laparoscopic surgery as the primary treatment option for ectopic pregnancy, followed by medical management with methotrexate, while acknowledging the existence of diverse treatment approaches in managing this condition.

Table 3: Outcome

Outcome	Frequency
Successful resolution, preserved fertility	60
Successful resolution, subsequent fertility	20
Ruptured ectopic, blood transfusion required	5
Residual trophoblastic tissue, methotrexate administered	3
Unruptured ectopic, preserved fallopian tube	4
Cornual ectopic, partial resection required	2
Tubal rupture, salpingectomy performed	2
Incomplete resolution, surgical intervention required	2
Other	2

(Table 3) presents the distribution of outcomes observed in the cohort of ectopic pregnancies analyzed. Among the 100 patients studied, the most frequent outcome was successful resolution of the ectopic pregnancy with preserved fertility, accounting for 60 cases. Additionally, 20 cases resulted in successful resolution with subsequent fertility. A small number of cases experienced complications, including ruptured ectopic pregnancies requiring blood transfusions (5 cases), residual trophoblastic tissue necessitating methotrexate administration (3 cases) and unruptured ectopic pregnancies with preserved fallopian tubes (4 cases). Other less frequent outcomes included cornual ectopic pregnancies requiring partial resection, tubal ruptures requiring salpingectomy and incomplete resolution necessitating surgical intervention, each occurring in 2 cases. Lastly, two cases were classified as "Other," indicating atypical or unique outcomes. These findings illustrate the diverse range of outcomes encountered in ectopic pregnancies, emphasizing the importance of successful resolution and the potential impact on future fertility while acknowledging the occurrence of various complications and less common scenarios.

(Table 1), Transvaginal ultrasound emerges as the most commonly employed diagnostic method in the analyzed population, consistent with its established role as a primary tool for ectopic pregnancy diagnosis. The frequency of 40 indicates its prominence and effectiveness in detecting ectopic pregnancies through visualization of the gestational sac and assessment of its location, size and viability[4]. The frequency of 30 for serum β-hCG levels combined with ultrasound suggests that this combined approach is also frequently utilized in the diagnosis of ectopic pregnancy. Measuring β-hCG levels and assessing their rise or fall in conjunction with ultrasound findings can aid in confirming the diagnosis and determining the location of the ectopic gestation[5]. The frequency of laparoscopy at 20 indicates its utilization as a diagnostic method in a notable proportion of cases. Laparoscopy, a more invasive procedure, may be employed when ultrasound and β-hCG measurements are inconclusive or when immediate intervention is required due to hemodynamic instability[2]. The category of "Other" with a frequency of 10 suggests the existence of alternative diagnostic methods not explicitly specified in the table. These methods may include additional imaging techniques, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or diagnostic laparoscopy, or specialized laboratory tests. Further investigation and review of relevant literature could shed light on these alternative diagnostic methods and their utility in diagnosing ectopic pregnancies[6]. (Table 2), Medical management using methotrexate, with a frequency of 40, demonstrates its significant role as an alternative to surgical intervention. Methotrexate, a folic acid antagonist, is administered in cases where the ectopic pregnancy is diagnosed early, the patient is hemodynamically stable and specific criteria are met. This approach allows for non-invasive management, preserving fertility and avoiding the need for surgery in select cases[2]. The frequency of surgical intervention through laparotomy, at 8, suggests its use in a smaller proportion of cases. Laparotomy is generally reserved for instances where laparoscopy is not feasible or when immediate intervention is required due to severe hemorrhage or extensive adhesions[4]. The category of "Other" with a frequency of 2 indicates the utilization of alternative treatment modalities not explicitly specified in the table. These alternative approaches may include expectant management (observation with close monitoring) or specialized interventions tailored to specific clinical situations. Further exploration of the literature and relevant studies could provide additional insight into these alternative treatment modalities and their applicability in the management of ectopic pregnancy[7]. (Table 3), The most frequent outcome observed, with a frequency of 60, is successful resolution of the ectopic pregnancy with preserved fertility. This outcome aligns with the primary goal of ectopic pregnancy management, which is to achieve resolution of the ectopic pregnancy while preserving the woman's fertility potential. It indicates that the majority of cases were effectively managed, resulting in a favorable outcome[8]. The frequency of 20 for successful resolution with subsequent fertility suggests that a proportion of patients were able to achieve subsequent pregnancies after the resolution of their ectopic pregnancies. This outcome emphasizes the importance of successful management in optimizing future reproductive potential for these women[9]. The frequencies of less common outcomes, such as ruptured ectopic pregnancies requiring blood transfusion (5), residual trophoblastic tissue necessitating methotrexate administration (3), unruptured ectopic pregnancies with preserved fallopian tubes (4), cornual ectopic pregnancies requiring partial resection (2), tubal ruptures necessitating salpingectomy (2), incomplete resolution necessitating surgical intervention (2) and "Other" (2), highlight the diverse range of possible outcomes encountered in ectopic pregnancy management. These outcomes demonstrate the varying clinical scenarios, complications and interventions that may arise in the management of ectopic pregnancies[10].

CONCLUSION

This clinical study of ectopic pregnancy aimed to investigate the clinical outcomes and factors influencing the management of this condition. The study provided insights into the diagnostic methods, treatment modalities, and outcomes associated with ectopic pregnancy. Transvaginal ultrasound emerged as the most commonly used diagnostic method, followed by serum β-hCG levels combined with ultrasound and laparoscopy. Surgical intervention through laparoscopy was the most frequent treatment modality, while medical management with methotrexate was also commonly employed. The outcomes varied, with the majority of cases achieving successful resolution and preserved fertility. However, a subset of cases experienced complications such as ruptured ectopic pregnancies requiring blood transfusion or residual trophoblastic tissue necessitating additional intervention. These findings highlight the importance of early detection, appropriate management and close monitoring in optimizing outcomes for women with ectopic pregnancies. Further research and exploration are warranted to enhance our understanding and improve

clinical practices in the diagnosis, treatment and long-term follow-up of ectopic pregnancy patients.

Limitations of Study:

- **Retrospective Design:** The study relied on the retrospective collection of data from medical records, which introduces the possibility of incomplete or missing information. The accuracy and reliability of data depend on the quality and completeness of the documentation, potentially leading to information bias.
- **Single-Center Setting:** The study was conducted at a single tertiary care center, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other healthcare settings or populations. Variations in patient characteristics, healthcare practices and resource availability across different centers or regions might impact the results.
- **Selection Bias:** The study's inclusion criteria and data collection methods may have introduced selection bias. The study population might not fully represent all cases of ectopic pregnancy, as some patients with milder symptoms or less severe cases may have been excluded or under represented. This could affect the generalizability of the results.
- **Lack of Control Group:** The absence of a control group in the study design makes it challenging to establish direct comparisons or causal relationships. Without a control group, it is difficult to differentiate the observed outcomes solely attributable to the treatment modalities or diagnostic methods employed.
- **Limited Follow-up:** The study might have a limited follow-up period, preventing a comprehensive assessment of long-term outcomes, including subsequent pregnancies, fertility and the risk of recurrent ectopic pregnancy. The impact of the interventions on future reproductive health might not be fully captured within the scope of this study.
- **Potential Confounding Factors:** The presence of unmeasured or uncontrolled confounding factors could influence the observed outcomes. Factors such as patient demographics, comorbidities, socioeconomic status and variations in healthcare provider expertise might impact treatment choices, outcomes and the effectiveness of diagnostic methods.
- **Data Interpretation:** Interpretation of the results relies on the accuracy and consistency of the diagnostic criteria and treatment documentation. Variations in clinical practices or inconsistencies in data recording could affect the validity and reliability of the findings.
- **Bias in Outcome Assessment:** The subjective assessment of outcomes, such as "successful resolution" or "preserved fertility," might introduce bias due to variations in the interpretation or classification of these outcomes by different healthcare providers.

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