Tool Helps Women Decide About Invasive Prenatal Testing

**The goal of the program is to help women make informed decisions consistent with their values.**

**BY SHERRI BOSCHERT**

San Francisco — A new computerized tool helps pregnant women decide whether they want invasive prenatal testing, Miriam Kuppermann, Ph.D., said during a meeting on antepartum and intrapartum management, sponsored by the University of California, San Francisco.

The tool, which was ready for clinical use in 2006, said Dr. Kuppermann of the university.

In a randomized, controlled trial, 496 pregnant women seen at three institutions in the San Francisco Bay area used the computerized decision-assistance tool or viewed a computerized version of a* a p p r o p r i a t e * brochures that the state requires clinicians to give to all pregnant women. Both were available in English and Spanish. Investigators assessed the impact of the tool or the brochures during three follow-up interviews.

“We do emphasize throughout that the goal of our program is neither to get women to test nor to get them not to test. The goal is to help them make an informed decision that is consistent with their own preferences and values,” she said.

Immediately after the computer session, 75% of women using the decision-assistance tool correctly estimated their risk for having a baby with Down syndrome, compared with 5% of women in the control group. A significant difference in knowledge persisted in the second follow-up interview 2 weeks later.

The state pamphlets do not provide an individual’s risk for Down syndrome. They are more susceptible to the risk for neural tube defects if the mother men subjects, which was published in 2003, found a higher rate of first-trimester losses in women who used a hot tub more than weekly within 4 weeks of their last menstrual period. A 2005 metaanalysis of 42 studies suggested an 86% increase in risk for neural tube defects if the mother used a hot tub, sauna, or electric blanket and developed a fever.

On average, a pregnant woman’s core body temperature will reach 102 degrees after 1 minute of soaking in 102-degree water or 10 minutes in 106-degree water. Skip hot tubs in the first trimester, and limit soaking time or water temperature after that, Dr. Autry advised.

**EXERCISE.** Getting hot from exercise is okay; there’s no evidence that hyperthermia from exercise is teratogenic. Even exercise at high altitudes appears safe in pregnancy.

**WHAT THE DATA SHOW ABOUT COMMON CONCERNS IN PREGNANCY**

**BY SHERRY BOSCHERT**

San Francisco — In the general ob.gyn. practice of Amy Meg Autry, M.D., visits with pregnant patients have evolved from being an equal time to examination and counseling to about 2% to examination and 98% to counseling.

Dr. Autry of the University of California, San Francisco, researched answers to some of their most common safety concerns regarding pregnancy and offered an overview of her findings at a meeting on antepartum and intrapartum manage-