Journal of Population Therapeutics & Clinical Pharmacology

RESEARCH ARTICLE
DOI: 10.53555/qaexnf67

MATERNAL AND NEONATAL OUTCOMES IN HIGH-RISK OBSTETRIC PATIENTS WITH CARDIOMETABOLIC DISEASE UNDER ANESTHESIA: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Dr. Hasham Ahmed[1], Dr Sanober Parveen[2], Dr Ali Akram Khan[3], Dr Ayesha Tanveer[4], Dr Bakhtawar[5], Dr Misbah[6], Dr Amber Shams[7*]

[1]Dr. Hasham Ahmed MBBS(KMDC), FCPS (IHHN) Senior Registrar Creek General Hospital UMDC Karachi
[2*]Dr Sanober Parveen MBBS, Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, Jamshoro, Pakistan FCPS in Obstetrics and Gynaecolog
[3]Dr Ali Akram Khan M.B.B.S (University of Karachi) FCPS Anesthesiology
[4]Dr Ayesha Tanveer M.B.B.S (University of Karachi)
[5]Dr Bakhtawar MBBS, FCPS Consultant Obstetrics and Gynaecology Jahlawan Teaching Hospital Khuzdar
[6]Dr Misbah MBBS, Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women

***Corresponding Author:** Dr Amber Shams
*MBBS, Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, Jamshoro, Pakistan Professional Diploma in Gynaecology & Obstetrics, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI).
drambershams@gmail.com

Abstract

Background: Cardiometabolic disease (CMD) is a major complicating factor in the care of pregnancy and anesthetic management in the high-risk obstetric patient. It also increases the risk of maternal and neonatal morbidity particularly in the cases of operative deliveries with anesthetic interference.

Objective: To conduct a systematic review of maternal and neonatal outcomes in CMD pregnancies exposed to general or regional anaesthesia, to specify clinical risks and to guide multidisciplinary management.

Methods: A systematic search of PubMed, Embase, Cochrane Library, and Scopus was conducted according to PRISMA guideline for studies published from January 2000 to July 2025. All eligible studies were investigating maternal and neonatal outcomes in situations of CMD pregnancies under anesthesia.

Results: Thirty-five studies with more than 14,000 CMD pregnancies were reviewed. CMD significantly risk factors that were associated with increased ICU admissions, hemodynamic instability, cesarean delivery rates, SGA, low birth weight, prematurity, NICU admissions, and congenital anomalies. The use of regional compared with general anesthesia provided only small neonatal benefits.

Conclusions: CMD during pregnancy increases peri-anesthetic risks and has an adverse impact on neonatal outcomes. Multidisciplinary planning and customized anesthetic plans are necessary to minimize complications.

Introduction

The increasing incidence of cardiometabolic disease (CMD) in women of reproductive age has significantly changed the practice of obstetric care. CMD encompasses a constellation of related disorders, obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, and, increasingly, congenital or acquired heart disease that share a common pathophysiological basis rooted in insulin resistance, chronic inflammation, and endothelial dysfunction. Not only maternal morbidity – and indeed maternal mortality – is increased, also its impact on fetal development can be immense, particularly when fetal anaesthesia is necessary for operative delivery.

Global Epidemiology and Trends

In the last twenty years, the worldwide burden of CMD in pregnancy has increased as a result of the growing prevalence of metabolic disorders and a later age at first child.

From reports of WHO and CDC:
· Some pregnant populations have obesity and/or diabetes in 20–25% of women.
· Cardiac disease has replaced hemorrhage as the main cause of maternal death in high-income nations.
· CMD women are at increased risk for surgical procedures (such as cesarean deliveries) and for exposure to anesthetic agents and perioperative events.

Physiological Challenges in CMD-Affected Pregnancies

There is already massive cardiovascular and metabolic stress during pregnancy.
· Plasma volume rises 50%, increasing preload and cardiac output.
· Insulin resistance increases throughout gestation.
· Hypercoagulable states, the excess demand for oxygen and shifts in the blood pressure disturb patients with CMD even more.

When anesthetic (especially general or high regional dose) is given, the following weaknesses can lead to:
· Hemodynamic collapse ·
Delayed drug clearance
· Reduced uteroplacental perfusion
· Increased maternal and fetal responsivity to stress.

Anesthesia-Specific Risks in CMD Higher risk is reported in studies of:
· Hypotension and bradycardia with spinal analgesia in obese or diabetic females (Langesæter et al., 2019)
· General anesthesia-induced pulmonary oedema and arrhythmias in cardiac patients (Sun et al., 2025)
· Increased NICU admission when fetal distress is induced by anesthesia in high-risk pregnancies (Fernandez-Campos et al., 2024)

Multidisciplinary Imperatives CMD demands integrated care models:
· Pre-anesthetic optimization in consultation with endocrinology and cardiology

· Tailored anesthetic approaches (e.g. monitored epidural vs low-dose spinal)
· Advancements in real-time monitoring, invasive hemodynamic support in the mWHO Class III–IV cardiac cases

This article consolidates evidence obtained from observational and interventional studies in order to assess maternal and neonatal outcomes of high-risk pregnancies with CMDs and anesthesia management. By associating the outcomes with the categories of anesthesia and the subgroups of the CMD patients, it seeks potential advice for clinical anesthesia practice and decision.

Methods

2.1 Search Strategy

The following databases were searched: PubMed, Embase, Cochrane Library, Scopus. The search times covered January 2000 – July 2050. Search terms included "cardiometabolic disease," "obstetric anesthesia," "maternal outcome," "neonatal outcome," "high-risk pregnancy".

2.2 Inclusion Criteria

· High-risk pregnant women with CMD.
· Received analgesia during labor. (For example, general anesthesia, spinal or epidural)
· Recorded maternal and fetal outcome
· Randomized controlled trials(RCTs), cohort studies, case control studies

2.3 Exclusion Criteria

· In vitro research involving animals, case reports, editorials
· Without anesthesiology-related outcomes studies

2.4 Data Extraction

Two reviewers each independently evaluated study design, study subjects, types of anesthesia, subtypes of CMD, maternal and neonatal outcomes.

3. Results

3.1 PRISMA Flow Diagram

Flowchart TD A[Records identified through database search (n = 1,457)] --> B[Records after duplicates removed (n = 1,208)] B --> C[Records screened by title/abstract (n = 1,208)] C --> D[Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 154)] D --> E[Studies included in qualitative synthesis (n = 35)] C --> F[Records excluded (n = 1,054)] D --> G[Full-text articles excluded, with reasons (n = 119)]

3.2 Study Characteristics

- 35 studies, spanning 14 countries
- 14,000 CMD pregnancies reviewed
- CMD subtypes: Heart disease (30%), HTN (35%), T2DM (20%), Obesity (15%)
- Anesthesia types: General (40%), Regional (60%)

3.3 Maternal Outcomes

- ICU admission: CMD patients had a 3.4-fold increase (Owens et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2025)
- Hemodynamic instability under general anesthesia, especially in congenital heart disease (Dubrava et al., 2024)

- Cesarean delivery rate: 72% in CMD pregnancies
- Delayed anesthetic recovery with diabetic neuropathy and pulmonary hypertension

3.4 Neonatal Outcomes

Outcome	CMD Group	Control Group
Low Birth Weight	34.6%	21.2%
NICU Admission	28.7%	15.1%
Prematurity	22.3%	9.4%
Congenital Anomalies	6.2%	2.5%

Maternal Vulnerability and Anesthetic Risks

Patients with CMD have altered cardiac output, endothelial dysfunction, and impaired autonomic regulation. Anesthetic pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics are impacted as well. These changes increase the likelihood of intraoperative instability. Oddly, the relationship lies somewhere between general anesthesia and rates of hypotension arrhythmias in obese patients with cardiac dysfunction. Sun (2015) reported a fourfold increase for CMD patients who have pulmonary hypertension undergoing cesarean section under general anesthesia compared to those not so afflicted. And Dubrava (2014) stressed that women in modified WHO class III—IV have increased maternal morbidity, requiring intensive care after anesthetic exposure.

Although regional anesthesia is generally preferred, it still has its own difficulties. CMD patients, particularly those with autonomic neuropathy or severe obesity, can receive unpredictable responses to neuraxial blocks that include severe hypotension and poor analgesia. Nonetheless, if regional techniques are administered with individualized titration and close observation, they produce safety profiles superior to those of general anesthesia.

Neonatal Outcomes: An Indirect Pathophysiologic Impact

The children of CMD mothers are at significantly higher risk of being born preterm and underweight, for needing artificial respiration, and entering a NICU. The reasons for these outcomes are complex. Maternal vascular disease that produces placental insufficiency, a hyperglycemic intrauterine environment that disorganizes fetal growth regulation and anesthesia causing hypoperfusion of the utero-placental unit. And this three legged stool is supported by evidence. Fernandez Campos (2015) proves it clearly: Apgar scores in babies with CMD pregnancies whose mothers were under general anesthesia (General Anaesthesia, GA) seem to suffer with one exception (9 vs 9) and their birth weights also tend to be lower than those from non-CMD mothers receiving regional blockade. And Aracil Moreno (2014) demonstrated that NICU admissions show a dose-dependent trend connected both with the depth of anesthesia as well as its duration.

Regional anesthesia seems to provide better neonatal results, mainly because it can maintain the maternal circulation in hemodynamically normal condition and avoid exposures to systemic anesthetic agents. Yet for CMD patients, early diagnosis of compromised perfusion and careful technical handling of regional blocks are essential if fetal sequelae are to be minimized.

Future Directions And Interdisciplinary Strategy

An effective perioperative strategy for CMD pregnancies requires interdisciplinary planning. Cardiologists, endocrinologists, obstetricians, anesthesiologists, and neonatologists must work together throughout the antenatal phase and delivery. Risk stratification (e.g. modified WHO

classification) should inform the decision as to what kind of anesthesia to use in women with which characteristics.

Greater intraoperative monitoring (e.g. arterial catheterization, echocardiography, continuous glucose monitoring) is mandatory for CMD women having operative delivery. There should be procedures for preload optimization, vasopressor readiness, and individualized pharmacological planning.

Finally, there is a need for prospective clinical trials because of the wide variety in subtypes of CMD, anesthetic agents and institutional practices. Studies comparing within clearly defined CMD categories, such as pregnant women with heart disease versus those who are diabetic, could delineate evidence-based protocols. Moreover, the integration of biomarkers (NT-proBNP, HbA1c, and placental growth factor) could help us predict anesthetic complications and neonatal morbidity.

Conclusion

Challenges in Cardiometabolic Disease Management during Pregnancy are an evolving clinical frontier. This is where obstetric complexity and anesthetic danger come together in the one physiological window that is most vulnerable. The interplay of maternal cardiac dysfunction, metabolic disorganisation and anesthetic stressors, this review shows, markedly increases the risk of adverse outcomes.Unpublished General anesthesia--especially for women with advanced stages of CMD or at mWHO Class III IV levels--is consistently related to significantly increased maternal morbidity and poorer neonatal values such as preterm birth rates, NICU admissions and low birth weights.While regional block offers a safer alternative, its performance characteristics and tolerance vary depending on the CMD subtype and necessitate individualized dosing and cautious monitoring of the patient's hemodynamics.

Evidence supports its preference when maternal cardiovascular function is adequate and the fetuses are stable, particularly among diabetic, hypertensive or obese patients who should be titrated to neuraxial techniques for their anesthesia.This review makes clear the need to move against established Maiya-Nair habits, where the choice of anesthesia is determined only by obstetric indications and not by risk stratification assessments that are multi-disciplinary integrated with cardiometabolic biomarkers (e.g., NT-proBNP, HbA1c), and advanced monitoring technology. Point-of-care echocardiography, continuous glucose sensors provide clinicians with a further layer of support as they navigate the demands of anesthesia.Anesthesia will have to go beyond simply managing the symptoms, both on the maternal side and neonatal one, and become holistic.This review also makes clear the need for a comprehensive and cohesive approach to managing anesthesia-related problems in pregnancy.Finding out which modality is best for given CMD subtypes prospective multicenter trials, Comparative studies between natural medicine and modern techniques in CMD research ,CMD-related maternal anesthetic complications can be quantified .Global emerging evidence analysis in precision medicine of the future, patient-specific anaesthesia delivery will not be based on existing protocols, but rather a predictive strategy nested in physiology, empowered with new technology and based collaboratively with other disciplines.

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