BACKGROUND

- Abused women experience a wide range of adverse health consequences, including poor mental health and impaired reproductive health.
- Women’s lack of fertility control in an abusive relationship is common.
- Although the association between intimate partner abuse (IPV) and women’s poor mental health functioning is well documented, it remains unclear whether women’s mental health functioning is linked with compromised fertility control.
- Women’s fertility control affects pregnancy outcomes, especially in an abusive relationship.
- Existing studies either focus mainly on the associations between fertility control and unintended pregnancy or examine fertility control as a mediating rather than an independent factor.
- Fertility control has not been examined in relationship to other adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as prematurity.

PURPOSE

Study I:
- Can an abused woman’s risk for miscarriage be predicted from fertility control items, when controlling for significant covariate?
- Can an abused woman’s risk for premature birth be predicted from fertility control items, when controlling for significant covariate?

Study II:
- The purpose of the study is to examine the relationships among fertility control, severity of abuse, and poor mental health among abused women.

METHODS

- Parent study: A longitudinal study to examine the long-term health and functioning consequences of IPV among 150 first-time users of safe shelters and 150 first-time users of the justice system following an abusive relationship.
- Repeated measures every 4 months.
- Measures assessed severity of abuse; danger for murder; mental health symptoms of depression, anxiety, somatization, and PTSD.
- At 32 months, 282 women completed the investigator-developed fertility control questionnaire.
- Statistical procedures: ANNOVA & logistic regression.

RESULTS

Study I:
- Women who reported a pregnancy related to the abuser not using birth control were 28 times more likely to have had a miscarriage related to abuse (Odds Ratio = 28.70, p < .05).
- Being abused for using birth control was associated with over 8 times the risk of having a premature birth (Odds Ratio = 8.34, p < .05).

Study II:
- ANOVA test results with p < .05:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fertility Control Items</th>
<th>Severity of Violence</th>
<th>Poor Mental Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Discuss # of kids</td>
<td>1. Threats</td>
<td>1. PTSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agree on number of children</td>
<td>2. Threats</td>
<td>3. PTSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Agree on time b/t pregnancies</td>
<td>4. Danger</td>
<td>4. Depression &amp; PTSD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

- Compromised fertility control is associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth and miscarriage.
- Controlling experiences around one’s reproductive health is associated with what appears to be more severe forms of abuse (i.e. increased lethality risk). Lack of control over fertility is associated with poorer mental health.

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