

More Clinics Treating Pregnant Women Addicted to Opioids



A growing number of clinics around the country are treating pregnant women who are addicted to prescription painkillers, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

They are often associated with university medical centers, and are free for patients.

The clinics often provide obstetric care, as well as counseling and addiction treatment. Some provide the opioid addiction treatment buprenorphine to patients.

A study published last year in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded a baby is born in the United States with symptoms of opioid withdrawal every hour.

The study found the number of pregnant women who are addicted to opioids, and the number of infants born with opioid withdrawal symptoms, has jumped in the past decade. An estimated 13,500 babies are born with withdrawal symptoms each year in the United States. Many babies who experience these symptoms must be hospitalized for weeks. Babies going through opioid withdrawal can have seizures, dehydration, breathing problems, tremors, difficulty feeding and irritability.

Dr. John Thorp, a professor at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, says many doctors are reluctant to treat pregnant women who are addicted to opioids. They often have complicated personal lives that include histories of abuse and criminal records. Many suffer from anxiety or depression.

At the Maternal Addiction and Recovery Center at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia, pregnant women are treated with buprenorphine, and must attend weekly group therapy sessions. They also attend monthly individual therapy sessions, as well as Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

The clinic has seen some promising results. Fewer babies are being born prematurely, and their average birthweight has risen. About one-fourth of the babies have not needed any treatment for

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withdrawal. However, more than one-third of the women who signed up for treatment never showed up for their first appointment, and one-fifth of those who were treated had to leave because they repeatedly violated the program's requirements.

To gain a greater understanding of Drugs and Drug Dependence, [please click here](#).