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1 Congenital anomalies in the offspring of women with total hip replacement: a nationwide register
2 study in Finland

3 Short title: Congenital anomalies in the offspring of women with total hip replacement

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16

17 Abstract

18 Background

19 Few previous studies have analysed the possible teratogenic effect of maternal total hip
20 replacement (THR) on congenital anomalies. The aim of this study was to estimate the risk of
21 major congenital anomalies in the offspring of women with THR. Furthermore, we compared the
22 risks based on type of implant (metal-on-metal (MoM)/Non-MoM).

23 Methods

24 The study population for this register-based cohort study was gathered from six Finnish national
25 registers. All fertile-aged females who underwent THR from 1980 to 2007 and three reference
26 females for each THR patient without THR were selected. THR operation day was the start of
the 27 follow-up for both groups. Information on pregnancies, induced abortions (IA) and
congenital 28 anomalies was gathered for the years 1987-2007 and the proportions of congenital
anomalies 29 were compared.

30 Results

31 In the THR group, 2 429 women had 256 pregnancies, 205 (80.1%) deliveries and 51 (19.9%) IAs. In
32 the reference group, 7 276 women had 1 670 pregnancies, 1 443 (86.4%) deliveries and 236
33 (13.6%) IAs. There was no difference in the incidence of major anomalies between the THR (3.5%,
34 n=9) and the reference group (3.6%, n=60), $p=0.91$. In the THR group, there was no difference in
35 the risk of major anomalies between the patients with a MoM-THR (10.5%, 2/19) and those with a
36 non-MoM (2.9%, 7/241) (OR 3.93, 95% Confidence interval 0.76-20.2; $p=0.13$).

37 Conclusions

38 Reassuringly, maternal THR does not appear to increase the risk of major congenital anomalies or

39 pregnancies ending due to suspected foetal anomalies. Further studies with larger study
40 populations are needed to further assess the risk of anomalies in the offspring of women having
41 MoM-THR.

42

43 Introduction

44 Total hip replacement (THR) is a highly effective operation that results in major
45 improvements in the quality of life of patients (1-4). Moreover, THR has become one of the most
46 common surgeries performed in Finland (5). Indeed, the incidence of primary THR in younger
47 patients aged 30 to 59 years old increased from 9.5 per 100 000 person years in 1980 to 61 per
48 100 000 person years in 2007. The increase in incidence was smaller in the youngest age group
49 (30-39) compared with the older age groups (40-49 and 50-59) (6). During the same period, the
50 total annual number of primary THRs performed on women aged less than 55 years increased
51 from 238 to 468 (7).

52 In 2017, over 1 000 women aged under 55 underwent THR in Finland (7). In young patients (under
53 30 years old), the most common indications for THR are juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (RA),
54 avascular necrosis of the femoral head and developmental dysplasia of the hip (8).

55 Previous studies have shown that pregnancy and delivery are safe after THR. These studies
56 have, however, been relatively small local case series. Although it seems THR does not have an
57 effect on the choice of delivery method nor on neonatal health (9-19), fertility rates are lower
58 after THR (20), and some women with THR may still have concerns about becoming pregnant (16).

59 MoM implants, used in Finland from 2000 to 2012, release Cr and Co which may cause
60 locally adverse reactions to metal debris and elevated blood Cr and Co levels (21, 22). In animal
61 studies, Cr has been shown to be toxic for the foetus and to cause malformations (23, 24). In
62 addition, Co has genotoxic effects (25-27). The ions released from MoM-THR also have the
63 potential to cause chromosomal damage to human cells (28, 29). Indeed, one case report
64 describes a woman with MoM THR and elevated serum chromium (Cr) and cobalt (Co) levels who

65 had a newborn with a congenital anomaly (hypospadias) (30). Furthermore, during pregnancy,
66 high maternal Cr levels increase the risk of preterm birth (31).

67 The placenta has been shown to reduce Cr and Co blood concentrations even though the ion
68 levels remain higher compared with references without elevated maternal Cr and Co levels (32-
69 34). In a retrospective case series, women with a MoM hip resurfacing implant were reported to
70 have undergone 17 pregnancies with 14 newborns without any anomalies detected (35). Another
71 study reported three healthy newborns without malformations when the mother had a MoM hip
72 replacement and also elevated Co and Cr ion levels (36). In a recent case report, the authors
73 described one healthy newborn with increased umbilical cord Cr and Co levels at birth that
74 normalised during the first three months, and no harm to the newborn was detected (37).

75 The aim of this present study was to evaluate the risk of major congenital anomalies in the
76 offspring of women who had undergone THR compared with a reference group without THR.
77 Further, we also evaluated whether MoM-THR would increase the risk compared with non-MoM-
78 THR and a reference group without THR.

79

80 Materials and Methods

81 In this register-based nationwide cohort study, the study population was gathered from six
82 different Finnish national registers. All the fertile-aged (15-45 years old) females who had
83 undergone THR surgery from 1980 to 2007 were identified from the Finnish Arthroplasty Register
84 (FAR), maintained by the National Institute for Health and Welfare. The register was established in
85 1980, and the completeness of the register is high for primary THR, being 95% in 2017 (7).

86 For every THR patient, three reference persons without recorded THR were selected from
87 the Finnish Population Information System maintained by the Population Register Centre. These
88 referents were matched by age, mother tongue and current place of residence. The start for the
89 follow-up was the THR operation day in the THR patient group and the same day was used for the
90 matched referents.

91 Information on pregnancies was obtained from three different registers, all maintained by
92 National Institute of Health and Welfare. The Medical Birth Register includes information on
93 pregnancies ending in birth after gestational week 22 or births weighing at least 500 grams and
94 deliveries and birth health outcomes up to seven days postpartum. The Medical Birth Register was
95 established in 1987 and information on all pregnancies from 1987 to 2007 was gathered for this
96 study. The Register on Induced Abortions (IA) has information on legally terminated pregnancies
97 that are performed in hospitals. It contains maternal background characteristics and abortion
98 indications. The register was established in 1983, but information on national IA ratios is available
99 from 1950.

100 The Register of Congenital Anomalies was established in 1962. In this study, we obtained all
101 the congenital anomalies from 1987 to 2007 for both study groups. The register contains
102 information on diagnosed or suspected major and minor anomalies in newborns and fetuses.
103 Every year, more than 2 000 major anomalies are reported to the register. In this study, we
104 evaluated all the anomalies and confirmed the major/minor diagnoses and then categorised the
105 diagnoses. Anomalies were grouped according to the ICD-10 classification.

106 Information on RA was obtained from the register of medical reimbursements maintained by
107 Social Insurance Institution of Finland. To gain reimbursement for medical costs due to chronic

108 disease, a certificate by a certified doctor is required. Participants without a record of RA
109 reimbursement were considered as not having the disease.

110

111 Permissions

112 All the data were linked by using the individual personal identification code. No written
113 consent was needed since the participants were not contacted. Permission to use the data was
114 granted by the register holders. Permission number: THL/599/5.05.00/2010.

115

116 Statistics

117 This study was based on partly prospectively collected nationwide register data. We then
118 conducted a retrospective analysis of this data. Means with standard deviations (SD's) were
119 calculated for Gaussian populations and medians with interquartile ranges for Non-Gaussian
120 populations. Categorized variables were analysed by Chi-square test or Fischer's exact test. A P-
121 value under 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant. Odds ratios with 95% Confidence
122 intervals (CI) were calculated to compare congenital anomalies between groups and subgroups.
123 Statistical analyses were performed by using the IBM SPSS for Windows v25.0- statistical program.

124

125 Results

126 In the THR patient group, a total of 2 429 woman had 256 pregnancies, and 80.1% of those
127 (n=205) ended in delivery and the remaining 19.9% (n=51) in IA. In the reference group, 7 276
128 women had 1 670 pregnancies, and 86.4% of which (n=1 434) ended in delivery and 13.6 %

129 (n=236) in IA, p=0.02. Mean age at the start of the follow-up was 37.7 years (SD 0.1) in both
130 groups.

131 In the THR patient group, 209 births occurred of which 205 (98.1%) were livebirths and 4
132 (1.9%) stillbirths, respectively. Eight (3.8%) newborns had one or more major anomaly. In the THR
133 patient group, 3 (5.9%) of the 51 IAs were performed due to suspected foetal defects. Of these, 1
134 had at least one major anomaly recorded to the register. In the reference group, a total of 1 451
135 births occurred of which 1 443 (99.4%) were livebirths and 8 (0.6 %) stillbirths. 47 (3.3%) of the
136 newborns had one or more major anomaly. In this group, 13 (5.5%) of the 236 IAs were performed
137 due to suspected foetal defects, and all of them had at least one major anomaly recorded to the
138 register. No major differences between these group were observed. When comparing RA patients
139 and non-RA patients between the THR patient and reference group, no differences were found.
140 Background characteristics and comparison between the groups are presented in Table I.

141 In the subgroup analysis, women who had undergone MoM-THR had 19 births/foetuses with
142 2 (10.5%) major anomalies. There was no significant difference in the incidence of major
143 anomalies between women with a MoM-THR (10.5%, n=2/19) and those with a non-MoM-THR
144 (2.9 %, n=7/241), OR being 3.93 (95% CI 0.76 – 20.2, p=0.13). Furthermore, there was no
145 significant difference in incidence between women with a MoM-THR and those without THR
146 (3.6%, n=60/1687; p=0.15).

147 In the THR patient group, 9 newborns and foetuses with major anomalies had 25 anomaly
148 diagnoses, and in the reference group 60 newborns and foetuses with major anomalies had 143
149 anomaly diagnoses. The most common major anomalies were heart and circulatory organ
150 anomalies, ICD-10 codes Q20 – Q28 (5 newborns/foetuses in the THR patient group and 21 in the

151 reference group), chromosomal, Q90 – Q99 (n=2 and n=14) and musculoskeletal anomalies Q65 –
152 Q79 (n=4 and n=12). (Table II)

153

154 Discussion

155 We found that newborns after maternal THR have similar rates of congenital anomalies
156 compared with referents without THR. According to these results, it seems safe to give birth after
157 THR. Moreover, non-MoM implants had similar proportions of anomalies as the reference group.
158 Since the birth rate is lower after THR and patients might have concerns towards pregnancy after
159 THR, these findings could possibly serve to decrease these concerns (16, 20).

160 Although women with MoM-THR had a slightly higher incidence of congenital anomalies
161 than either the patients with non-MoM-THR or referents, these differences were not statistically
162 significant. Due to the low number of MoM patients and events in this study, the true effect
163 remains uncertain. MoM implants have been shown to release metal ions (Cr and Co) into the
164 blood circulation that may be harmful to human cells (21, 22, 28). Even though the placenta
165 prevents the majority of ions from entering the foetal blood circulation, the ion levels in the
166 foetuses of MOM-THR patients have been shown to be elevated compared with foetuses without
167 maternal MoM-THR (32-34). Johnson et al. contacted retrospectively 48 women aged under 40 at
168 the time of MoM hip resurfacing. Among these women, 17 pregnancies occurred with 14
169 livebirths. No congenital anomalies were reported. This study also reported no problems in
170 childhood development among these children. (35) Based on the previous literature and the
171 results of our study, the possible teratogenic effect of the metal-ions released from the MoM
172 implant cannot be ruled out. Therefore further research is needed to clarify this issue. It also
173 seems obvious that we need either longer follow-up to confirm this result or, alternatively, a study

174 approach, where information from several national registries would be merged to study this issue.
175 These actions could potentially solve this problem.

176 There were no major differences when the types of anomaly were compared between the
177 groups. The most common anomaly in both groups was heart and other circulatory organ
178 anomalies. Interestingly, newborns in the reference group seemed to have higher proportions of
179 facial anomalies compared with the THR group. However, due to the small incidences of
180 anomalies, the comparison of groups based on anomaly types was not statistically sound.

181 Since THR patients have higher incidences of juvenile RA compared with national levels, it
182 was also taken as part of the analysis in our study. RA does not to increase the risk of congenital
183 anomalies, although some of the drugs used to treat RA have been shown to be teratogenic and
184 are thus prohibited during pregnancy (38, 39). In our study, the THR and RA patients had similar
185 rates of congenital anomalies compared with non-RA patients.

186 To the best of our knowledge, this is the first register-based study that assesses the effect of
187 THR on the incidence of congenital anomalies on a population-based level and with a reference
188 group. Our study provides nationwide data with a long study period and follow-up. The data
189 recorded to the registers have good quality and completeness. Moreover, the register-based study
190 design eliminates recall bias since the anomalies were gathered from recorded reliable registers
191 instead of questionnaires.

192 We acknowledge a few limitations in this study. First, the low number of events during the
193 study period weakens the generalisability of our results. Since THR is a relatively rare operation in
194 younger fertile women, the number of pregnancies as well as the number of the anomalies
195 remained quite small. Second, an even longer study follow-up would have aided us in evaluating
196 more reliably whether the MoM-implants would potentially affect the incidence of anomalies.

197

198 Conclusions

199 Maternal THR does not increase the risk of congenital anomaly in newborns. Further studies with
200 larger study populations and longer follow-up are needed to confirm our finding of unelevated risk
201 for anomalies in the offspring of women having undergone MoM-THR.

202

203 Declaration of conflicting interests

204 The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with this study.

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208

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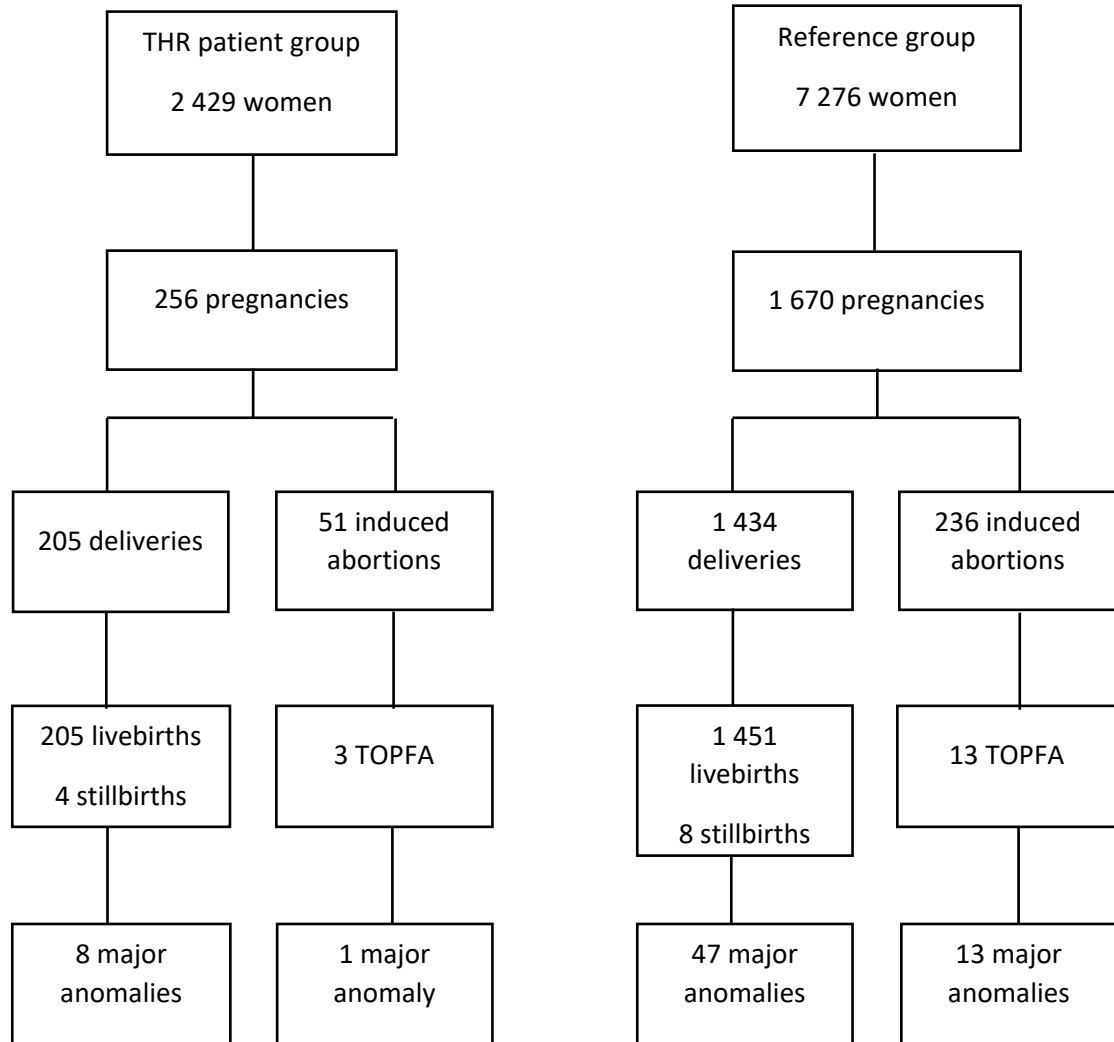
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Figure I. Flow chart of study population and pregnancies in the THR patient and the reference cohort.



TOPFA = Termination of pregnancy due to foetal anomaly.

THR = Total hip replacement

Table I. Total number of births/terminated pregnancies due to foetal anomaly, number outcomes with malformation in the THR cohort and the reference cohort, and the odds ratio (OR) with 95% confidence interval (CI) for major congenital malformation in the offspring of women with THR in relation to the reference cohort.

	Women with THR			Women without THR			OR	95% CI	
	Births/foetuses	Major anomalies	%	Births/foetuses	Major anomalies	%		Lower	Upper
	n	n		n	N				
Total	260	9	3.5	1 687	60	3.6	0.98	0.48	1.98
Pregnancy outcome									
livebirth	205	8	3.9	1 443	47	3.3	1.20	0.56	2.58
stillbirth	4	0	0.0	8	0	0.0	-	-	-
Induced abortion	51	1	2.0	236	13	5.5	0.34	0.04	2.66
TOPFA*	3	1	33.3	13	13	100.0	-	-	-
Age at pregnancy									
15-24	15	0	0.0	97	1	1.0	-	-	-
25-34	121	5	4.1	913	24	2.6	1.58	0.59	4.19
35-44	124	4	3.2	676	35	5.2	0.61	0.21	1.74
Age at THR/index date**									
15-24	82	3	3.7	551	15	2.7	1.36	0.38	4.77
25-34	138	6	4.3	871	29	3.3	1.32	0.54	3.22
35-44	40	0	0.0	261	16	6.1	-	-	-
Previous pregnancies									
0	73	5	6.8	367	10	2.7	2.63	0.87	7.84
1 or more	187	4	2.1	1313	50	3.8	0.55	0.20	1.54
Rheumatoid arthritis									
Yes	103	4	3.9	7	1	14.3	0.24	0.02	1.89
No	157	5	3.2	1680	59	3.5	0.90	0.36	2.28
Implant material***									
MoM	19	2	10.5				3.93	0.76	20.2
Non-MoM	241	7	2.9						

*TOPFA = termination of pregnancy due to foetal anomaly

** Index date: The THR operation day in the THR patients was used for matched referents.

*** Odds ratios counted for Metal on Metal (MoM) implant patients in relation to Non-MoM patients.

Table II. Proportions of major congenital anomalies in births/foetuses in the THR patient group and the reference group without THR.

	ICD-10 codes	Women with THR				Women without THR			
		cases		anomalies		cases		anomalies	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total		9	100.0	25	100.0	60	100.0	143	100.0
Type of anomaly									
Heart and circulatory organs	Q20 – Q28	5	55.6	7	28.0	21	35.0	31	21.7
Musculoskeletal	Q65 – Q79	4	44.4	5	20.0	12	20.0	19	13.3
Central nervous system	Q00 – Q07	2	22.2	3	12.0	11	18.3	16	11.2
Chromosomal	Q90 – Q99	2	22.2	2	8.0	14	23.3	15	10.5
Genitourinary	Q50 – Q56, Q60- Q64	2	22.2	2	8.0	4	6.7	7	4.9
Gastrointestinal	Q38 – Q45	2	22.2	2	8.0	7	11.7	8	5.6
Facial (ear, mouth, nose, eye)	Q10 – Q18, Q35 – Q37	1	11.1	2	8.0	14	23.3	32	22.4
Respiratory	Q30 – Q34	1	11.1	2	8.0	4	6.7	4	2.8
other	Q80 – Q89	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	16.7	11	7.7