Sudden infant death syndrome in infants born to HIV-infected and opiate-using mothers

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OBJECTIVE: This study was undertaken to determine the role of opiate use during pregnancy as a predisposing factor for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in infants born to HIV-infected mothers. METHODS: In order to identify all infant deaths and their cause and association with maternal opiate use, the data of a nationwide prospective cohort study of HIV-infected mothers and their children were extracted and analysed for a 13-year period. RESULTS: 24 (5.1%) infant deaths were observed out of 466 infants followed up until death or at least 12 months of life. 3 (0.6%) of them were due to non-accidental trauma and were not associated with maternal opiate use. 7 (1.5%) died due to SIDS, which was confirmed by autopsy. All SIDS cases occurred in infants born to mothers reporting use of opiates during pregnancy (n = 124). The relative risk of SIDS compared to the general population was 18 (95% CI 9 to 38) for all infants of HIV-infected mothers, and 69 (95% CI 33 to 141) for those with intrauterine opiate exposure (p<0.001). CONCLUSIONS: Compared to the Swiss general population, the risk for SIDS in this cohort of infants born to HIV-infected mothers was greatly increased, but only for mothers reporting opiate use during pregnancy. This effect appeared not to be mediated by prematurity, low birth weight, perinatal HIV infection or antiretroviral drug exposure.