

6. Summary:

In a study about the use of medical drugs during pregnancy 4694 women were interviewed and their use of drugs documented. After childbirth the babies were medically examined and special attention was given to record minor anomalies as possible indicators for intrauterine damage caused by the medication used. At the age of 18 months the children were again examined and their mental and physical development tested using Bayley Scales of infant development in order to detect retardations or defects not apparent at first sight.

As part of the overall study, this investigation deals with the intake of dihydroergotamine as antihypotensive drug during pregnancy.

Owing to design and location of the study the selected mother-and-child-pairs are not an adequate sample. The interpretation of the data give no significant evidence of an increased risk of birth defects caused by dihydroergotamine. However, the incidence of five or more minor anomalies was significantly higher in the dihydroergotamine group, a typical pattern or combination of anomalies could not be detected though. The only statistically significant association was recorded for DHE and simian crease of the feet. The assumption that an increased number of minor anomalies is highly predictive of a major malformation could not be supported by the findings of this study.

Further long-term studies will be necessary to be able to detect these minor effects of the use of drugs in pregnancy.