Factors associated with prenatal ultrasound utilization

Prenatal ultrasound utilization has been steadily increasing globally, which can be concerning due to unnecessary costs on healthcare systems as well as safety issues. Although generally considered safe, the long-term effects of ultrasound in pregnancy have not yet been determined and increased exposure to ultrasound has been shown to cause cell death, increased maternal anxiety and unnecessary medical interventions. It is important to investigate the factors associated with prenatal ultrasound utilization, in hopes of identifying areas that can be targeted via interventional or educational efforts aiming to optimize the utilization of prenatal ultrasound.

Therefore, the objectives of this dissertation are:

1- To investigate the factors associated with timing of first prenatal ultrasound in Canada
2- To investigate the relationship between the number of prenatal ultrasounds and caesarean delivery in Canada and the USA
3- To investigate the relationship between having a single or multiple providers during pregnancy with the number of ultrasounds received per pregnancy.

Two databases will be used to address these objectives: The Maternity Experiences Survey which was a national Canadian Survey targeting Canadian women who gave birth in 2006, and the Listening To Mothers III survey which was a national survey from the USA targeting women who gave birth in 2011-2012. In this presentation, the findings from the first objective will be discussed and preliminary findings from the second objective will be presented.