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The prenatal diagnosis of congenital heart defects

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The prenatal diagnosis of congenital heart defects has contributed to an increase in survival of patients and the decrease of costs for the healthcare system. In the past few years, advances in technique and technology have allowed a better visualization of the fetal heart, as well as further understanding and interpretation of pathological findings, increasing accuracy of prenatal diagnosis of congenital heart defects and improving therapeutic strategies and patients' outcome. The experience in prenatal diagnosis in a specialized tertiary healthcare centre is presented. In a 5-year period, 230 patients with prenatal diagnosis of congenital heart defects were born in our centre. In 90% of these cases prenatal and postnatal diagnosis were the same. In 7/230 (3%) postnatal echocardiograms were normal, being coarctation of the aorta, the most frequent diagnosis in this group. In the period studied, 3 patients with normal foetal echocardiogram performed in the second trimester developed aortic coarctation after birth requiring surgery. Identifying congenital heart defects with lower detection rates and/or higher false-positive rates helped to focus on those areas that required further attention and research. Among these prenatal detection of coarctation of the aorta represented the greatest diagnostic challenge. Prenatal diagnosis of most types of severe congenital heart defects is feasible and it contributes to the improvement of the patients' outcome in many aspects. Continuous research in fetal cardiology has allowed better understanding of antenatal natural history of these diseases, more precise diagnosis and in some cases timely intervention and reduced morbidity and mortality.

Biography

Sofia Grinenco, Medicine Doctor (MD), is a Pediatric Cardiologist member of the Fetal Medicine Unit at Hospital Italiano Buenos Aires, Professor of fetal cardiology at Fundación Hospitalaria, Council Member of the Cardiology Committee of the Argentine Society of Pediatrics (SAP), member of the Argentinian Society of Prenatal Diagnosis and Therapy (SADIPT), member of the Association for European Pediatric and Congenital Cardiology (AEPC), with several Postgrade courses on Epidemiology and Statistics and on Clinical Bioethics.

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