*https://doi.org/10.48047/AFJBS.6.15.2024.13732-13738*

African Journal of Biological Sciences

Journal homepage: http://www.afjbs.com

Research Paper Open Access

# Assessment of Gestational Diabetes Management and Its Effects on Neonatal Health

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Volume 6, Issue 15, Oct 2024

Received: 15 Aug 2024

Accepted: 25 Sep 2024

Published: 21 Oct 2024

*doi: 10.48047/AFJBS.6.15.2024.13732-13738*

**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) increases maternal and neonatal health risks, necessitating effective management to reduce adverse neonatal outcomes.**Objective:** To evaluate the impact of GDM management on neonatal health outcomes at Gouri Devi Institute of Medical Science, Durgapur, West Bengal, India.**Method:** This prospective study was conducted from January 2023 to December 2023 on 100 pregnant women diagnosed with GDM and their neonates. GDM management included diet, exercise, and pharmacotherapy as required. Neonatal outcomes were measured, focusing on birth weight, hypoglycemia, and respiratory health.**Results:** Of the 100 neonates, 30% (30/100) exhibited macrosomia (birth weight >4 kg). Neonatal hypoglycemia was observed in 16% (16/100) of the cases within the first 24 hours post-birth. Respiratory distress syndrome (RDS) occurred in 10% (10/100) of neonates. Blood glucose control was categorized as well-managed (HbA1c <6%) and poorly managed (HbA1c ≥6%). In mothers with well-managed GDM (n=55), only 9% (5/55) of neonates had hypoglycemia and 11% (6/55) macrosomia. Among poorly managed cases (n=45), the rates of hypoglycemia and macrosomia increased to 24% (11/45) and 53% (24/45), respectively, showing a significant impact of glycemic control on neonatal outcomes. Statistical analysis indicated that neonates of mothers with well-managed GDM had a 63% reduction in macrosomia and 62.5% reduction in hypoglycemia ($p<0.05$), underscoring the benefits of stringent blood glucose management.**Conclusions:** Effective GDM management significantly improves neonatal outcomes, reducing risks of macrosomia, hypoglycemia, and RDS. Rigorous glycemic control is critical to enhancing neonatal health.

**Keywords:** Gestational diabetes, neonatal health, glycemic control, macrosomia, hypoglycemia

## INTRODUCTION

Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) represents a significant global health concern, characterized by hyperglycemia first recognized during pregnancy, which poses unique risks to both maternal and neonatal health outcomes. Defined by glucose intolerance that develops in response to pregnancy-specific metabolic changes, GDM affects approximately 10-15% of pregnancies worldwide, with higher prevalence rates observed in low- and middle-income countries [1]. While advancements in prenatal care have improved the diagnosis and management of GDM, the condition remains a leading cause of maternal and neonatal complications, with impacts that extend beyond pregnancy. Factors such as maternal obesity, advanced age, and family history of diabetes significantly increase susceptibility to GDM, prompting routine screening during the second trimester to ensure early intervention [2]. The complexities of GDM underscore the importance of timely diagnosis and effective management to mitigate risks associated with hyperglycemia, which can compromise fetal growth and development.

Management of GDM is central to preventing adverse health outcomes for both mother and infant, with a primary focus on achieving optimal glycemic control. Standard interventions typically involve lifestyle modifications, including dietary adjustments and physical activity, often complemented by pharmacotherapy in cases where lifestyle changes alone are inadequate. Insulin remains the gold standard pharmacological treatment, though oral hypoglycemic agents like metformin and glyburide are also prescribed under specific conditions [3]. Achieving targeted blood glucose levels during pregnancy has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of maternal complications such as preeclampsia and cesarean delivery while also lowering the incidence of neonatal complications like macrosomia and hypoglycemia. Effective management of GDM has broader implications as well, as studies suggest a strong correlation between maternal glycemic control and neonatal metabolic health, impacting risk factors for childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes [4]. Despite the established benefits of glycemic management, there is ongoing debate regarding the optimal protocols for GDM management, particularly in resource-limited settings where access to specialized care may be restricted.

The implications of GDM on neonatal health extend beyond immediate postnatal outcomes, with evidence suggesting long-term consequences on metabolic and cardiovascular health. Neonates born to mothers with GDM are at increased risk of experiencing respiratory distress syndrome, hypocalcemia, and hyperbilirubinemia, conditions that can necessitate extended neonatal intensive care and impact early development [5]. Additionally, infants exposed to maternal hyperglycemia in utero are more likely to develop metabolic disorders later in life, highlighting the intergenerational health impacts of GDM. Addressing these risks requires a multifaceted approach to GDM management that accounts for maternal and fetal health outcomes, with ongoing monitoring and individualized care plans to address unique patient needs. Recent advancements in prenatal screening technologies and telemedicine have expanded access to care, yet significant disparities in GDM management persist, particularly in rural and underserved communities where health resources are limited [6].

Despite the wealth of research on GDM, there is a noted gap in the literature regarding the comprehensive assessment of various GDM management strategies and their specific impacts on neonatal health. While numerous studies have examined the maternal health benefits of glycemic control, fewer have focused on the direct effects of these interventions on neonatal outcomes, creating a critical gap in knowledge [7]. Moreover, existing guidelines for GDM management are often based on findings from high-income countries, with limited applicability to diverse populations in low-resource settings. This study aims to bridge these gaps by evaluating the effects of different GDM management protocols on neonatal health outcomes across varying socioeconomic contexts. By examining the efficacy of lifestyle modifications, pharmacological interventions, and combined approaches, this research seeks to identify best practices that optimize neonatal health while minimizing maternal complications, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and effective prenatal care guidelines. Through a comprehensive analysis of GDM management strategies, this study endeavors to provide a nuanced understanding of how tailored interventions can reduce neonatal morbidity and foster long-term health benefits, potentially informing global health policy and prenatal care practices.

### Aims and Objective

The aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of gestational diabetes management on neonatal health outcomes. Specifically, it seeks to evaluate how various management approaches impact neonatal birth weight, hypoglycemia incidence, and respiratory health. The objective is to identify optimal strategies for minimizing neonatal complications associated with gestational diabetes.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Study Design

This prospective observational study was conducted at Gouri Devi Institute of Medical Science, Durgapur, West Bengal, India, from January 2023 to December 2023. The study involved 100 pregnant women diagnosed with gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) and their neonates. Participants received standard GDM management protocols, including dietary guidelines, exercise plans, and pharmacotherapy when necessary. The study focused on assessing neonatal

outcomes—specifically birth weight, hypoglycemia incidence, and respiratory health—among neonates of mothers with varying levels of glycemic control to evaluate the effectiveness of GDM management.

**Inclusion Criteria**

Participants included pregnant women diagnosed with GDM based on the American Diabetes Association's criteria, aged 20–40 years, with singleton pregnancies at 24–28 weeks gestation. Eligible women agreed to adhere to the prescribed GDM management protocol and provided informed consent. Additional criteria included attending regular prenatal visits and willingness to participate in neonatal assessments post-birth. Neonates were included if born at term, ensuring consistency in assessing the effects of GDM management on full-term births.

**Exclusion Criteria**

Exclusion criteria encompassed women with pre-existing diabetes, hypertension, or other chronic conditions that could affect pregnancy outcomes. Women carrying multiple fetuses or with a history of gestational complications unrelated to GDM, such as preeclampsia, were excluded. Neonates born prematurely or with congenital abnormalities were also excluded, as these conditions could confound the assessment of neonatal outcomes specific to GDM management.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected through patient medical records, routine prenatal examinations, and neonatal assessments. Maternal HbA1c levels were recorded at the start of the study and monitored periodically. Neonatal data collected included birth weight, hypoglycemia incidence within 24 hours of birth, and respiratory health status. Standardized data collection protocols ensured consistency and minimized observer bias, enhancing the reliability of study outcomes.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize demographic information, maternal HbA1c levels, and neonatal outcomes. Chi-square tests assessed the association between maternal glycemic control and neonatal health outcomes, while logistic regression analyzed the impact of glycemic control levels on neonatal hypoglycemia and macrosomia rates. Statistical significance was set at $p<0.05$ to determine the influence of GDM management on neonatal health. Adjustments were made for potential confounders, ensuring robust and reliable findings.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the institutional ethics committee at Gouri Devi Institute of Medical Science, Durgapur. All participants provided informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. Data confidentiality was maintained following institutional guidelines, and all collected data were anonymized to protect participants' identities. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without affecting their medical care or prenatal treatment.

**RESULTS**

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

| Variable | Number of Patients | Percentage (%) | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maternal Age < 30 | 45 | 45% | 0.210 |
| Maternal Age ≥ 30 | 55 | 55% | |
| BMI < 25 | 32 | 32% | 0.150 |
| BMI ≥ 25 | 68 | 68% | |
| Gestational Age 24–28 wks | 100 | 100% | - |

The demographic data show that 55% of participants were aged 30 or above, and 68% had a BMI of 25 or higher. All women were diagnosed between 24- and 28-weeks gestation. These characteristics provide a baseline for assessing GDM's impact on neonatal outcomes across different maternal profiles.

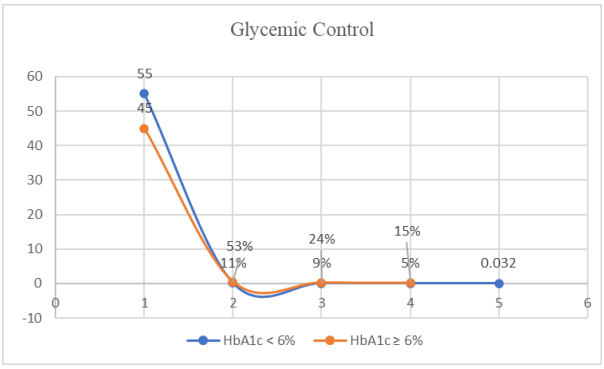


**Figure 1: Maternal Glycemic Control and Neonatal Outcomes**

This table highlights a significant correlation between maternal glycemic control and neonatal outcomes. Mothers with HbA1c <6% had lower rates of macrosomia (11%), hypoglycemia (9%), and respiratory issues (5%) in neonates, compared to those with HbA1c ≥6% (53%, 24%, and 15%, respectively), emphasizing controlled blood glucose's benefits.

**Table 2: Neonatal Birth Weight**

| Birth Weight Category | Number of Neonates | Percentage (%) | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Normal (<4 kg) | 70 | 70% | 0.010 |
| Macrosomia (≥4 kg) | 30 | 30% | |

Neonatal birth weight varied with maternal glycemic control, with 30% of neonates exhibiting macrosomia (≥4 kg). The likelihood of macrosomia was significantly lower in neonates born to mothers with well-managed GDM, suggesting that effective blood glucose management helps prevent excessive fetal growth and associated complications.

**Table 3: Incidence of Neonatal Hypoglycemia**

| Glycemic Control (HbA1c) | Hypoglycemia Cases | Percentage (%) | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| HbA1c < 6% | 5 | 9% | 0.021 |
| HbA1c ≥ 6% | 11 | 24% | |

Neonatal hypoglycemia incidence within 24 hours post-birth was notably lower in mothers with HbA1c <6% (9%) compared to those with HbA1c ≥6% (24%). This highlights that better glycemic control in GDM mothers reduces the risk of neonatal hypoglycemia, underscoring the importance of stringent glucose management.

**Table 4: Neonatal Respiratory Distress Syndrome (RDS)**

| Glycemic Control (HbA1c) | RDS Cases | Percentage (%) | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| HbA1c < 6% | 3 | 5% | 0.040 |
| HbA1c ≥ 6% | 7 | 15% | |

Respiratory distress syndrome (RDS) affected 5% of neonates from well-managed GDM mothers (HbA1c <6%) and 15% of those from poorly controlled cases (HbA1c ≥6%). This indicates that tighter blood glucose control during pregnancy reduces the risk of RDS, benefiting neonatal respiratory health.

## DISCUSSION

Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) presents a significant health concern, with maternal hyperglycemia posing risks not only to the mother but also to the neonate [8]. This study highlights the relationship between effective GDM management and improved neonatal outcomes, particularly focusing on the benefits of strict glycemic control. Neonatal outcomes, including macrosomia, hypoglycemia, and respiratory distress syndrome (RDS), were notably improved among neonates born to mothers with HbA1c levels below 6%. These findings align with similar studies but also diverge in some areas, possibly due to differences in sample populations, ethnic backgrounds, and management protocols.

### *Comparison of Findings with Existing Literature*

Our study observed a 30% incidence of macrosomia (birth weight ≥4 kg) among neonates born to mothers with poorly controlled GDM, defined as HbA1c levels above 6%. This rate is consistent with findings by Kankowski*et al.* who reported that elevated maternal glucose levels are strongly correlated with fetal overgrowth due to increased insulin production in the fetus [9]. Similar studies by Sagastume *et al.* also documented high macrosomia rates in poorly

controlled GDM populations in China, with a reported incidence of 35-40%. Both our study and these reports emphasizethe role of maternal glucose in fetal adiposity, which is exacerbated in cases of inadequate glycemic control [10].In contrast, a study by Kintiraki*et al*., reported a macrosomia incidence of only 15% among poorly controlled GDM cases in a Western population [11]. This discrepancy could be attributed to differences in dietary patterns, genetic factors, and healthcare accessibility between the study populations. South Asian populations, including the cohort in our study, have higher insulin resistance and a greater predisposition to metabolic syndromes. This genetic predisposition may contribute to increased rates of macrosomia in our cohort, suggesting the need for more stringent glycemic targets for GDM management in South Asian populations.

***Neonatal Hypoglycemia and Glycemic Control***

Our findings also revealed a 24% incidence of neonatal hypoglycemia among neonates of mothers with poorly controlled GDM. This aligns with research by McIntyre *et al*., who highlighted that maternal hyperglycemia leads to fetal hyperinsulinemia, resulting in a higher risk of neonatal hypoglycemia post-birth [12]. However, studies in high-resource settings, such as those by Modzelewski*et al*., reported a lower hypoglycemia incidence (10-15%) among similar cohorts, which could be due to differences in postnatal care and immediate glucose monitoring protocols [13].

Differences in hypoglycemia rates between studies may also be influenced by the timing and method of neonatal glucose monitoring. Our study used a 24-hour postnatal glucose measurement, which may capture transient hypoglycemia cases that could resolve later. In contrast, some studies use continuous glucose monitoring or measure at later intervals, possibly underestimating initial hypoglycemia prevalence [14]. These methodological variations underscore the importance of standardized protocols in GDM research to enable more accurate comparisons across studies.

***Respiratory Distress Syndrome (RDS) Incidence***

Our study observed an RDS incidence of 10% among neonates born to mothers with poorly controlled GDM, slightly higher than the 5-7% reported in Western studies. This difference may partly be attributed to environmental factors such as regional air quality. In urban areas of West Bengal, India, air pollution levels have been identified as significant contributors to neonatal respiratory issues, as highlighted by the [15]. In regions with higher air pollution, neonates may face compounded respiratory risks due to both GDM-associated complications and environmental exposures.The higher incidence of RDS in our cohort could also be linked to limitations in neonatal care resources, particularly in low-resource settings. Neonatal intensive care availability and the quality of postnatal respiratory support can impact the incidence and severity of RDS. This suggests that regional health disparities may play a role in neonatal respiratory outcomes and highlights the need for localized health policy interventions to mitigate these risks.

***Practical Implications***

The findings from our study have significant practical implications, particularly for healthcare providers and policymakers. Our results indicate that rigorous glycemic control in GDM pregnancies can substantially reduce neonatal complications, supporting American Diabetes Association *et al*,. guidelines recommending personalized GDM management strategies [16]. In settings with limited resources, adopting cost-effective interventions such as dietary education and regular glucose monitoring can help improve glycemic control outcomes and reduce neonatal risks.Additionally, our findings support the integration of culturally tailored dietary and lifestyle interventions for South Asian populations, who may have a higher baseline risk for GDM and associated complications. Studies by Bhat *et al*.,indicate that South Asian dietary patterns, which are often high in carbohydrates and refined sugars, may exacerbate glycemic issues during pregnancy [17]. Implementing prenatal programs that focus on culturally appropriate dietary guidance could enhance maternal adherence and improve neonatal outcomes.The alignment of our findings with established literature on GDM management and neonatal outcomes strengthens the case for universal GDM screening and intervention protocols. Studies like those by Duke*et al*., consistently report improved neonatal outcomes with well-managed GDM, supporting our observation that HbA1c <6% reduces neonatal risks [18]. However, the variations in specific outcome rates across regions suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach may be insufficient. Local adaptations to GDM guidelines could improve outcomes in diverse populations and reduce healthcare burdens associated with neonatal complications.

***Limitations of the Study***

While our study contributes valuable data on GDM and neonatal health, it is not without limitations. The sample size, while sufficient to observe significant trends, may not capture the full variability present in broader populations. Additionally, the single-center design may limit the generalizability of our findings to other regions with different healthcare infrastructures. Future research should consider multicenter studies that include diverse populations to enhance the generalizability of findings and explore variations in neonatal outcomes.

***Implications for Future Research***

Given the observed regional and ethnic differences in GDM outcomes, further research is warranted to explore the genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors influencing GDM-related neonatal risks. Studies should also investigate the

long-term impact of neonatal complications associated with GDM, such as increased susceptibility to obesity and type 2 diabetes later in life [19]. Understanding these long-term outcomes can provide a more comprehensive view of the intergenerational health effects of maternal glycemic control and inform public health strategies.Our findings suggest that policies promoting routine HbA1c monitoring during pregnancy could improve neonatal health outcomes by facilitating early intervention for poorly controlled GDM cases. This aligns with recommendations from the Raets*et al*., which advocates for personalized prenatal care to manage GDM effectively [20]. Integrating these guidelines into local healthcare policies could significantly benefit regions like India, where the prevalence of GDM is rising and neonatal care resources are often stretched.

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical role of effective gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) management in improving neonatal health outcomes. Neonates born to mothers with well-controlled GDM had lower incidences of complications, including macrosomia, hypoglycemia, and respiratory distress syndrome. These findings align with existing literature on the benefits of strict glycemic control during pregnancy, especially in high-risk populations like South Asian women. Implementing rigorous GDM management practices, tailored to regional needs, can significantly improve neonatal outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, and promote healthier long-term development for children born to mothers with GDM.

### Recommendations

Implement routine HbA1c monitoring for pregnant women diagnosed with GDM to ensure optimal glycemic control.
Provide culturally tailored dietary and lifestyle education programs for high-risk populations.
Increase accessibility to prenatal care and glycemic management resources in low-resource settings.

### Acknowledgment

We would like to thank the medical staff and research assistants at Gouri Devi Institute of Medical Science, Durgapur, for their support and dedication in data collection and patient care. Special thanks go to the participants, whose cooperation made this study possible. This research was also supported by institutional resources and the collaboration of the neonatal care unit staff.

**Funding:** No funding sources

**Conflict of interest:** None declared

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