Introduction

Maternity care in the United States is known to differ depending on provider specialty; however, based on the literature, these differences are not the consequence of differences in patient characteristics alone.1,2,3 It is hypothesized that the culture and training of the various specialties, in addition to the medical environment of certain locations in which providers practice, contribute to these differences.

With regard to maternity care providers, there are various types available, including obstetricians, family physicians, midwives, and in some cases, nurses, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Many factors influence a woman’s selection of prenatal provider including the choices of family members, friends and acquaintances, insurance coverage, as well as their pre-existing relationship with a health care provider at the time of pregnancy.

Using the Listening to Mothers III: National U.S. Survey of Women’s Childbearing Experiences, this study seeks to identify differences in maternal demographics, risk factors and attitudes about childbirth depending on prenatal provider type, whether an obstetrician, family physician, midwife, or midwife. The objective is to provide a clearer picture of the maternity care landscape, for women, their families and providers from the perspective of mothers.

Methods

Harris Interactive® conducted Listening to Mothers III: The Third National U.S. Survey of Women’s Childbearing Experiences on behalf of Childbirth Connection. The survey consisted of 2400 online interviews with women who had given birth between July 2011 and June 2012 with weighting of data to reflect the target population. Interviews were conducted from October 11 through December 26, 2012, and the survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

All respondents were asked a series of preliminary questions to determine their eligibility for the survey. To be eligible, respondents had to be 18 through 45 years of age, to have given birth between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012 in a U.S. hospital to a single baby, to have that child still living at the time the survey was conducted, and to be able to respond to a survey in English.

This analysis was limited to first-time mothers, and therefore included a smaller sample size of 902 women. Preliminary statistical analyses of differences in the proportion of women treated by obstetricians (OB), family physicians (FP), and midwives (MW) according to survey variables was conducted using likelihood ratio chi-square analyses. Statistical significance defined as p<0.05.

Discussion

- **Demographics:** Significant difference in the proportion of women receiving prenatal care by OBs, FPs and MWs due to factors outside of maternal choice.
- **Risk Factors:** There is an increase in the proportion of women receiving prenatal care from FPs among those who are also treated for co-existing medical conditions.
- **Attitudes:** Differences highlight need to improve awareness of evidence-based maternity care guidelines among all pregnant women, regardless of prenatal provider type.

References