Commentary on Routine weighing of women during pregnancy—is it time to change current practice?

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Currently, over half of women begin their pregnancy either overweight or obese, which is linked to serious consequences for themselves and their babies. Additionally, it has been found that even if women who are of a normal weight have a BMI increase of 1-2 points in between pregnancies, there are increased risks of adverse outcomes in later pregnancies. Alongside weight status before and after pregnancy, gaining too much weight during pregnancy is also associated with adverse consequences. Therefore it is important to determine appropriate ranges for weight gain in pregnancy, to improve outcomes for mothers and their babies. However, women in the UK are not weighed throughout their pregnancy anymore, which means there is no data on patterns of, and total pregnancy weight gain in women in the UK. The Institute of Medicine in America have guidelines on gestational weight gain based on women’s pre-pregnancy BMI, however NICE have not supported use of these guidelines due to a lack of data which suggest they are appropriate for women in the UK.

This commentary reviews evidence on the history of routine weighing in the UK, and weighs up the evidence for re-introducing the practice. We make the argument that in order to collect the data necessary to inform pregnancy weight gain guidelines, routine weighing needs to be brought back into standard antenatal care.

This commentary would be of interest to health professionals working in maternal care, researchers working in the area of weight management and pregnancy, and those involved in policy making in the area of weight management and pregnancy, in order to stimulate discussion and debate on the subject of routine weighing in antenatal care.

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