

## Research program IZS VE 02/15

**Development of a multi-strategy model aimed at creating and disseminating information on microbiological risks in food to pregnant women**

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Although food safety is one of the main global health concerns, many consumers underestimate risks related to food handling, preparation and consumption. Pregnant women are one of higher-risk groups for foodborne illness [1]. Changes in immune system make women more exposed to microbiological risks in general, and more susceptible to contracting specific pathogens like *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella* species, which can cause severe disease and can be passed to the fetus [2].

Some foods are most likely to contain these pathogens, and pregnant women should be encouraged to protect themselves taking care to food handling and preparation, and consumption behaviors [3].

The study aims to develop a multi-strategy model that combines social research methods, learning methodologies and risk communication strategies. Starting from the analysis of the target health information needs, training and communication activities will be developed, with special attention to craft effective messages.

A food safety communication campaign during pregnancy will be developed at a local and national scale, with the goal of raising awareness about the risks of foodborne illness and protect women and their unborn children. A participatory approach will be applied [4, 5]. The number of food risk communication campaigns targeted to pregnant women in Italy is quite limited and restricted only to few experiences. Moreover, women are provided usually with general information about nutrition and lifestyle for a healthy pregnancy, not specifically to food risks.

The campaign will be mainly web-based and organized with audiovisual production and printing resources on food safety. Moreover, multilingual information will be targeted to foreign pregnant women, of diverse ethnic communities, to promote inclusive health education.

- [1] EFSA – European Food Safety Authority and ECDC – European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2014). The European Union Summary Report on Trends and Sources of Zoonoses, Zoonotic Agents and Food-borne Outbreaks in 2012. *EFSA Journal*, 12(2): 3547, 312 pp.
- [2] Jamieson, D. J., Theiler, R. N., & Rasmussen, S. A. (2006). Emerging infections and pregnancy. *Emerging infectious diseases*, 12(11), 1638.
- [3] Pereboom, M.T.R., *et al.* (2013). Observational study to assess pregnant women's knowledge and behaviour to prevent toxoplasmosis, listeriosis and cytomegalovirus. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 13(1): 98.
- [4] Lofstedt, R. E. (2010). Risk communication guidelines for Europe: A modest proposition. *Journal of Risk Research*, 13(1), 87-109.
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