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Summary

A mother's gift: Infant's microbiota

SMARAGDI FESSATOU

UEG Week Barcelona 2026 | Presentation

Nurses

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The speaker presented evidence that maternal microbiome influences infant immune and metabolic development through metabolites and immune signals during pregnancy, with major microbial colonisation occurring at delivery and continuing through the first 1000 days of life.

KEY POINTS

- Current evidence does not support a stable viable microbiome in foetal or placental tissue in healthy pregnancy; prenatal microbial programming occurs through maternal metabolites and immune signals rather than direct colonisation.
- The first 1000 days from conception to approximately two years represents a critical window of developmental plasticity during which the microbiome is sensitive to disruption but also capable of recovery.
- A study of more than 700 mother-infant pairs showed the mother's gut is the main source of bacteria found in the infant gut, though effects of Caesarean delivery are not necessarily permanent.
- Antibiotic exposure during pregnancy has been linked by the speaker with wheeze, asthma, atopic dermatitis, food allergy and changes in infant microbiome inflammation.
- Vaginal seeding has not yet shown clear clinical benefit and maternal faecal microbiota transfer is still experimental; the speaker recommended supporting maternal health, breastfeeding and healthy diet while avoiding unnecessary antibiotics.
- In the Q&A, the speaker stated that living with pets and in countryside areas is very good for immune system development and microbiota, reducing allergy risk, and emphasized that maternal diet before, during and after pregnancy is key.

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