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DEPARTMENT: NURSING

COURSE TITLE: PHYSIOLOGY

COURSE CODE: PHS212

ASSIGNMENT TITLE: PREGNANCY

QUESTION: Elucidate the physiological adaptations of the female to pregnancy

ANSWERS

Pregnancy is a unique period in a woman’s lifetime. A number of anatomic, physiologic, biochemical and psychological changes take place. But we are going to elucidate the physiological adaptation;

\*Skin changes: A number of changes take place in the skin of pregnant women. Mechanical stretching of the skin over the breasts and abdomen can lead to striae. The increased levels of estrogen and progesterone have also been implicated

\*Changes in gastrointestinal system: Nausea and vomiting are the most frequent complaints involving the gastrointestinal system and usually happens in the early pregnancy while heartburn will happen primarily in late pregnancy.

\*Cardiovascular changes: Of all the changes that happen in pregnancy, this is the single most important one, adequate cardiovascular adaptation secures good placental development and thus appropriate fetal growth. In brief, the cardiovascular changes involve a substantial change in blood volume, cardiac output, heart rate, systemic arterial blood pressure, systemic vascular resistance, oxygen consumption and alterations in regional blood flow of various organ system.

\*Cardiocirculatory changes during labour and delivery: During labour significant hemodynamic changes take place. These changes can in part be explained by the effect of the uterine contractions, which may cause a significant increase of 300 to 500ml in central blood volume, and in part by the effect of pain and anxiety on the cardiovascular system. It is important to note here that in the lateral position, cardiac output between contractions is higher than in the supine position and the increase during contractions is smaller.

\*Hemodynamic changes in the postpartum period: In postpartum period the blood volume decreases by about 10 percent on the patients who undergo vaginal delivery and 15-30 percent for those who undergo cesarean section .

\*Some physiological respiratory changes are; anatomic changes and pulmonary ventilation.

\*Changes in the reproductive system: Rhythmic tightening of the uterus occur as part of preparatory changes for labour. These are called Braxton-Hicks contractions and since the advent of ultrasound, can be seen as early as eight to nine weeks. As the pregnancy advances these contractions become more frequent and they are more likely to be left by the patient. Usually they happen every 5 to 20 minutes and sometimes they may last as long as 30 minutes.

\*Muscular and Skeletal And Neurologic Symptoms: A number of women may experience backache in the upper back, which is secondary to muscle tension from increasing breast size. Most women, however, experience low back pain secondary to muscular fatigue and strain that is caused by the changes in body balance from the growing uterus.

PS: Above are some of the physiological adaptation of the pregnancy of a female.

THE END.