

Fetal Programming and its Implications on Long Term Health

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The fetal programming concept, first described by David Barker, suggests that maternal nutritional and metabolic imbalances during pregnancy has a persistent effect on the health of offspring, including risk of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. We now recognize that there is trouble at “both ends of the birthweight spectrum”. Globally and locally, maternal overweight and diabetes during pregnancy has overtaken undernutrition. These offspring, born large for gestational age, are at higher risk of obesity and metabolic syndrome in childhood and adulthood. This “intergenerational obesity cycle” requires a life course approach. Potential measures to curb this “cycle” will be discussed.