INTRODUCTION

- (DRA): a midline separation of the rectus abdominis as a result of partitioning of the intermediary tissue, the linea alba.1,2,3,4
- (DRA): research in postpartum maternal health lacking in both quantity and quality
- (DRA) occurs primarily in pregnant and postpartum women.5,4
- DRA prevalence is estimated to be in 50-60% of postpartum women.1,2,3,9,4
- Follow-up studies available demonstrate that significant DRA may persist in women at 6 to 12 months postpartum in the absence of rehabilitation.6,7
- Goal of paper: improve postpartum management of DRA and comorbidities: incontinence (stress, urge, and mixed), pelvic organ prolapse (POP), postpartum depression, pelvic girdle pain (PGP), and lumbopelvic pain.

METHODS

- DRA and post-partum rehab lit review was completed from 1980-May 2014 searching PubMed, Scholar, CINAHL and Scopus.
- All literature in English regarding DRA were considered for inclusion
  - only excluded if irrelevant to evaluation and management of DRA or post-partum rehabilitation. 51 documents reviewed.

RESULTS (KEY FINDINGS)

- Diagnosis 
  - Normal inter-recti distance (IRD): 13 +/- 7 mm above the umbilicus
  - Parous females: normal IRD is 15-25mm supraumbilically with digital calipers.
- Complications/Risk Factors:
  - Parker et al (2008)
    - DRA prevalence 74.4% among primips or more with back or pelvic area pain who sought PT (n=39, mean age 41.4).
    - N= 8100% post laparoscopy had DRA
    - 50.9% of the control group (n=53 having delivered <3 children) had DRA
    - significant difference in abdominal/pelvic pain levels between those with and without a DRA.
    - No significant difference in VAS back pain levels between those with and without DRA.
  - Retrospective chart review of 547 OB patients and those with DRA:4
    - 2.56 times more likely to have fecal incontinence
    - 2.25 times more likely to have POP
    - 1.28 times more likely to have urinary incontinence.
- Exercise
  - DRA and Exercise review
    - exercise during pregnancy reduced presence of DRA by 35%
    - suggested DRA width may also be reduced during and after pregnancy
    - Studies were of poor quality in general
  - Post-partum exercise advice: 38% received advice on physical activity or exercise, 18% reported that the advice came from a health care professional.12
  - TrA work post-partum widens linea alba while a crunch narrows linea alba.12

CONCLUSION

- Multidisciplinary collaborative research is needed to implement clinical guidelines for intervention
- More research needed to solidify connections between lack of support of the abdominal and pelvic floor muscles postpartum and severe impairments later in life, particularly during the menopausal years
- Correlations drawn between DRA and/or muscle weakness in the early postpartum years and POP surgery or urinary incontinence treatment in later years- could result in less surgical intervention and cost-savings

Selected References for Poster: