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The impact of financial incentives for low-income pregnant women participants of the Brazilian conditional cash transfer program on early identification of pregnancy

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**Background:** Pregnant women enrolled in the Brazilian conditional cash transfer (CCT) *Programa Bolsa Família* became eligible for an additional monthly transfer (approximately USD 9/month for 15 months) conditioned on prenatal care in November 2011. The aim of the study was to evaluate the impact of financial incentives for pregnant women participants of the CCT on early pregnancy identification. **Methods:** Quasi-experimental design using data of all pregnant women (N=938,720) enrolled in the CCT and first identified between Jan 2010 and Dec 2013. Data on last menstrual cycle date and identification date by the family health program team were used to calculate gestational age. Interrupted time series was applied to estimate the effect of financial incentives on early pregnancy identification (gestational age  $\leq$  12 weeks). Models were adjusted for age, race/color, education, and geographic region. To rule out the effects of a concurrent program that increased federal investments on prenatal care (*Rede Cegonha*), we ran stratified models for municipalities with high and low investments for this program. **Results:** A significant decrease in the mean gestational age was observed after the implementation of the financial incentive (from 23.22 weeks; 95%CI 23.08,23.35 to 22.51 weeks; 95%CI 22.37,22.64). The before-intervention downward trend on the mean gestational age at the first encounter was maintained ( $p < 0.001$ ). Rede Cegonha investments did not change the results. **Conclusion:** The results show that financial incentives geared towards low-income women are capable of significantly influencing early identification of pregnancy, which can result in better prenatal care follow-up and improved birth outcomes.