BACKGROUND: The mean maternal age at childbirth is increasing worldwide and adverse maternal and perinatal outcomes have been associated with this.

OBJECTIVES: To determine the effects of maternal age on pregnancy outcome among women aged 40 years and above at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH), Rivers State.

METHODS: A retrospective case control study was conducted. This involved a study group of women aged 40 years and above (n = 249) and a control group of women aged 20 – 29 years (n = 249) who delivered at 28 weeks gestation or beyond between January 1 2008 and December 31 2012. The medical records of the patients were retrieved and Epi Info ver 6.04d statistical package used for data management.

RESULTS: The mean age of the women in the study group was 41.2 ± 1.75 versus 26.10 ± 2.37 in the control group. Advanced maternal age was associated with a significantly higher rate of caesarean deliveries, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, diabetes mellitus abnormal lies and presentations, low birth weight and congenital foetal malformations (p<0.05). Although antepartum haemorrhage, preterm labour, foetal distress, low Apgar scores and postpartum haemorrhage were commoner in the older women, they were not statistically significant.

CONCLUSION: Advanced age should not be a contraindication to pregnancy although such pregnancies are noted to have serious public health impact because of increased risks of adverse outcomes. Our patients should be counseled pre and post conception on these risks so they are well informed and seek appropriate necessary care.