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ABC Avoiding Brain injury in Childbirth (ABC) Collaboration Programme Information

A national programme for intrapartum fetal surveillance and management of impacted fetal head at caesarean section

Preventable harm during labour is catastrophic for women and their families. There is a national drive to reduce preventable harm by 50% by 2025. These targets include a major focus on intrapartum brain injury, which is frequently linked to the practice of fetal surveillance in labour. The evidence is clear that effective intrapartum fetal surveillance requires a whole systems approach involving the whole maternity team.

Impacted fetal head and resulting complications are increasingly encountered at caesarean section. However, there are currently no national guidelines, consensus for best practice, or evidence-based training for the management of this maternity team emergency.

Programme outline

The RCM is undertaking exciting and innovative work, jointly with the RCOG, to develop and deliver a national training programme for the management of impacted fetal head at caesarean section.

This work will be funded by the Department of Health and will be in collaboration with the 'THIS institute'.

The aims of this important work are:

- To develop and test a range of evidence-based resources to support maternity professionals in effectively identifying, escalating, and acting upon fetal deterioration during labour, and
- To improve the response to the obstetric emergency of impacted fetal head at caesarean section.

Project output

The project outputs will include:

- a systematic literature review summarising learning from 'track and trigger' approaches in other areas of healthcare
- production of an optimised protocol and associated tools
- development of training resources for intrapartum fetal surveillance and the management of impacted fetal head at caesarean section



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Approach

The approach is a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach, including consensus building and co-production approaches with service users and maternity professionals. This will include a consensus building exercise to develop a shared approach to:

- fetal surveillance in labour
- the maternity team management of impacted fetal head at caesarean section
- the development and testing of a range of tools to support identification, escalation, and action

The RCM's Brain Injuries Prevention Programme Consultant Midwife post, and a team of 3 Intrapartum Fetal Surveillance/Impacted Fetal Head Project Midwife posts, will support this work. These RCM postholders will work collaboratively with other members of the programme team within the RCOG and 'THiS Institute'. The programme team will include a research fellow, clinical obstetric lead, clinical midwife lead, improvement manager and a full-time programme manager and business support manager.

Project duration

The project is beginning in July 2021. We will be working rapidly to deliver the project objectives over the next 12 months.

This project is phase one of a longer-term programme. There will be a process to secure funding for phases 2 to 3 run over the next 3 years.