



Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health

Improving the health of mothers, babies and children

Media information

10th October 2007

CEMACH release: Caring for babies of diabetic mothers

The Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH) will release its report on the care for newborn babies of mothers with types 1 and 2 diabetes.

This study has revealed that a high proportion of diabetic women in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have their babies admitted to a special care baby unit often because of routine hospital policies.

Over half of all neonatal admissions were assessed by expert panels to be avoidable, mainly due to no specific medical indication for admission and in other cases because babies were not being kept warm enough.. This leads to unnecessary separation of babies from their parents.

The findings of the *Diabetes in Pregnancy: Caring for baby after birth. Findings of a national enquiry* also show that there were a number of barriers to breastfeeding. These were:

- A quarter of babies did not have early feeding on the labour ward
- Infant formula was given as first feed to two-thirds of babies.
- Maternal choice not to breastfeed was the main reason for infant formula feeding on the postnatal ward.

The first blood glucose measurement was often performed too early to be informative, with inaccurate methods of testing used and insufficient documentation of management.

The report recommendations are for:

- Mothers with diabetes to receive advice about the benefits of breastfeeding for their child during the antenatal period
- Babies to be with their mothers immediately after birth, provided there are no postnatal complications. Early mother-baby contact helps to establish breastfeeding and to regulate the temperature in babies.
- Encouragement of breastfeeding within an hour of birth, but all mothers should be supported in the feeding method of their choice
- Better guidelines and training for healthcare professionals in the management of babies of mothers with diabetes

Richard Congdon, CEMACH Chief Executive said,

“The great majority of babies born to mothers with diabetes these days receive high quality care but we did identify a number of problems in our enquiry. More

babies could stay with their mothers than is now the case and mothers with diabetes should be encouraged and supported to breastfeed their babies. If these aims were achieved, it should be better both for mother and baby and also save the NHS money."

Dr Dominique Acolet, CEMACH Clinical Director of Perinatal Epidemiology and author of the report said,

"Babies of mothers with diabetes have more complications than other babies and do need careful monitoring. Nevertheless in the absence of specific risks or complications, every effort should be made to ensure that these babies can be kept with their mothers safely in order for bonding, temperature control and breastfeeding to take place. There are many benefits of early interaction between mother and baby in general and for these babies as well and hospitals should have policies to enable this to happen. The NICE Diabetes in pregnancy national guidelines to be published soon should help midwives and paediatricians in this matter."

Ends

Notes

The Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH). Diabetes in Pregnancy: Caring for the baby after birth. Findings of a National Enquiry: England, Wales and Northern Ireland. CEMACH: London; 2007.

For more information on this press release and to speak to Dominique Acolet, please call Gerald Chan at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on 020 7772 6446.

The Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH) aims to improve the health of mothers, babies and children by carrying out confidential enquiries on a nationwide basis and by widely disseminating its findings and recommendations. CEMACH started in 2003 and its remit includes conducting studies into maternal deaths, stillbirths and deaths in infancy. For more information, please visit www.cemach.org.uk.