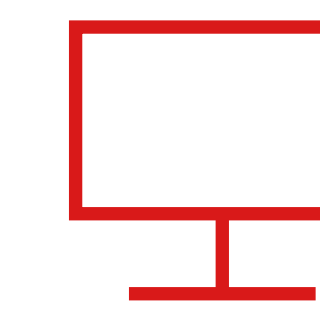


Is “poor acoustic window” a meaningful indication for consultative fetal echocardiography?

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1 OBJECTIVES

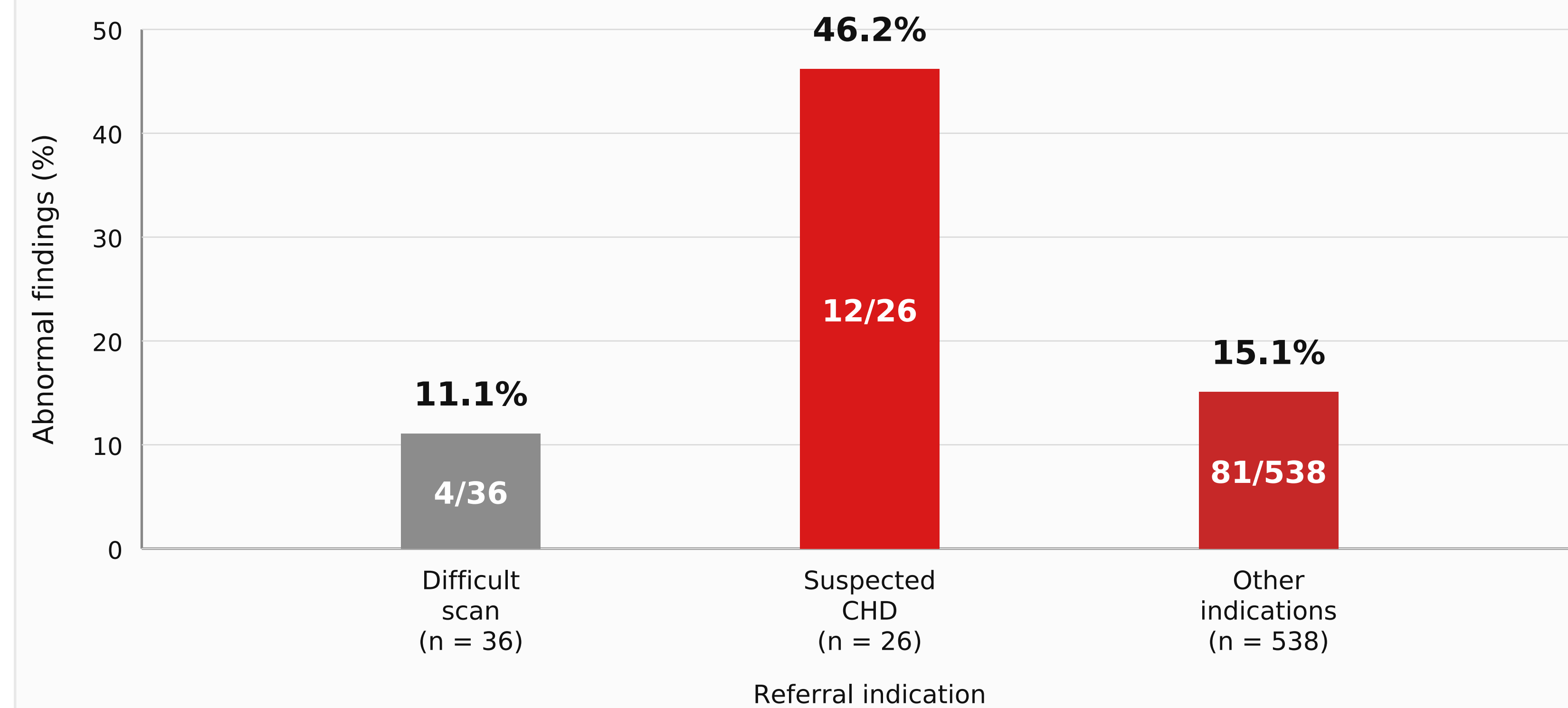
To evaluate the diagnostic yield of consultative fetal echocardiography when the primary referral indication is “difficult scan/poor acoustic window” compared with suspected congenital heart disease (CHD) and other indications.

2 METHODS

- Analysis of 600 consultative fetal echocardiography examinations from a tertiary fetal cardiology clinic database.
- Primary indication “difficult scan” defined by an internal code for suboptimal acoustic window and/or incomplete cardiac views at screening ultrasound.
- Comparison groups: suspected CHD and all other referral indications.
- Primary outcome: any abnormal finding in the final report (structural or functional cardiac abnormality and/or major extracardiac anomaly).
- Statistical analysis: proportions with 95% confidence intervals, odds ratios for abnormal findings, and comparison of median gestational age between groups.
- Median gestational age at examination: 27-28 weeks across all groups.

3 RESULTS

Diagnostic yield by referral indication



Diagnostic yield by indication

Indication group	n	Abnormal, n (%)
Difficult scan	36	4 (11.1%)
Suspected CHD	26	12 (46.2%)
Other indications	538	81 (15.1%)



Full cohort

Abnormal findings were present in 97/600 examinations (16.2%).



Difficult scan

Diagnostic yield was modest: 4/36 abnormal findings (11.1%).



Suspected CHD

Highest yield: 12/26 abnormal findings (46.2%).



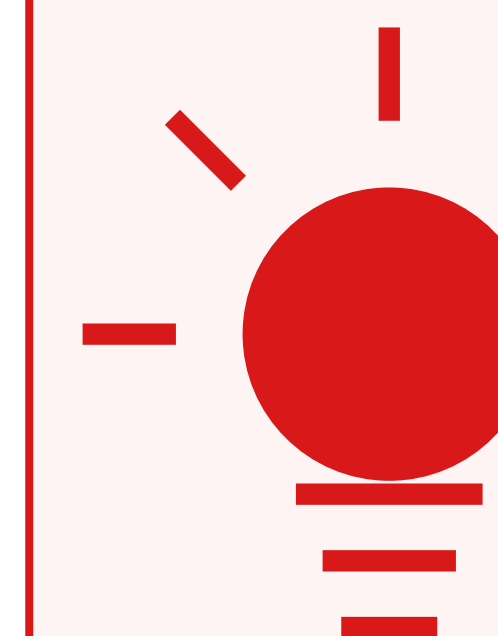
Comparative odds

Difficult scan vs suspected CHD: OR 0.15 (95% CI 0.04-0.53).

4 CONCLUSIONS

- “Difficult scan/poor acoustic window” alone was associated with a modest diagnostic yield.
- Yield was clearly lower than for suspected CHD and similar to other non-specific indications.
- In the absence of additional fetal or maternal risk factors, referral solely for poor acoustic window may have limited incremental diagnostic value.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE



Poor acoustic window had a measurable but limited diagnostic yield (11.1%). Tertiary fetal echocardiography is most valuable when poor views coexist with suspected CHD or other fetal or maternal risk factors.



Keywords: Echocardiography, Screening, Second trimester, Third trimester.



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