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Utilization and clinical utility of third trimester ultrasound: an audit in a tertiary care center in Quebec

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Objectives

To evaluate the indications, findings and quality of third trimester ultrasounds in a tertiary care center.

Methods

We conducted a retrospective audit of third trimester ultrasounds performed over a five-day period in July at a tertiary obstetrics center with an active maternal-fetal medicine unit. Data collected included maternal characteristics, indication for ultrasound and imaging findings. Appropriateness was assessed by comparing clinical indications with ultrasound findings.

Results

Over five clinic sessions, most third-trimester ultrasounds were requested for

suspected fetal growth abnormalities by primary care providers and obstetrician–gynecologists. Most examinations were normal, with abnormal findings identified in 18.9% of cases and corresponding to the documented indication in 60% of those cases. Doppler assessment was infrequently performed or documented, while fetal growth and placental assessments were otherwise largely reassuring.

Conclusion

Third trimester ultrasound demonstrated **limited clinical utility, as most examinations were normal and correlation between indications and findings was poor.** Inconsistent documentation and incomplete Doppler assessment highlight opportunities to improve guideline adherence.