

Supporting labour analgesia choices for the East Timorese community

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Introduction

Providing labour analgesia choices and supporting decision making are fundamental to the role of the obstetric anaesthetist. Our Trust provides care for 5000 - 6000 deliveries per year. We have a significant local population (2,874) of residents from Timor-Leste (East Timor), a small nation in SE Asia with a similar size population to Northern Ireland. Approximately 93% of this community live within our catchment area. Timorese population averages for the UK estimate up to 20,000, so a concentration of this group live in our relatively unpopulated region (0.7% vs 0.03% of UK).

The native language of East Timor is Tetum, with a small number of Portuguese, English and Malay speakers. Even amongst Tetum speakers there is significant regional variation in dialect and tradition. Whilst Northern Ireland has Tetum interpreters, we have sometimes had difficulty accessing this service out of hours – often when it is needed most, for instance at an emergency caesarean section. There is no phone interpreter service for Tetum in the UK. Many of these women have an interaction with anaesthetists and a higher incidence of operative delivery compared with the general population.

Methods

The Labour Pains website contains excellent material to help women make decisions about labour analgesia, in conjunction with their anaesthetist. We use standard written information in labour, so translating it enables equity of information for our Tetum speaking patients.

We decided to translate the Labour Pains epidural information card as a starting point. We identified the Trust's pre-existing pathways for translation services and submitted a costing for three different translation providers, with a final agreed sum of £150 for translation. There was then a significant 6-month delay in processing of the translation from the provider. We also spoke to the Tetum interpreters on an opportunistic basis and found that they were receptive to the idea.

Results

Written translations became available for use in labour analgesia from January 2023. Now that these leaflets are in active use, we hope to obtain feedback from patients regarding their experience of using the written information.

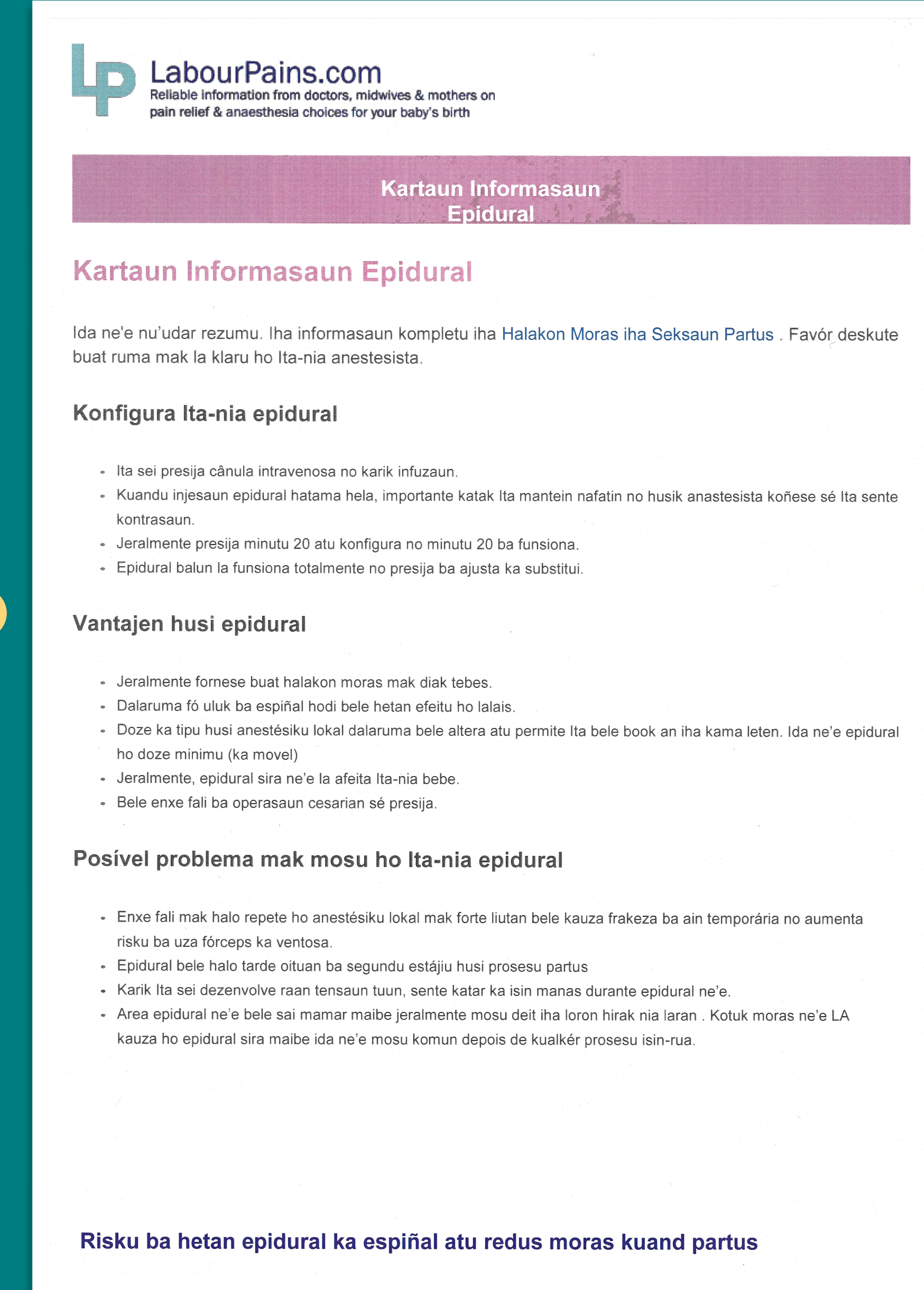
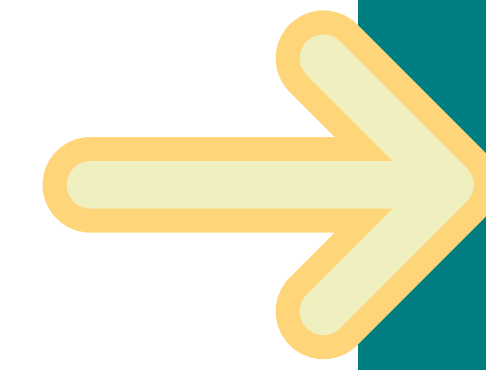
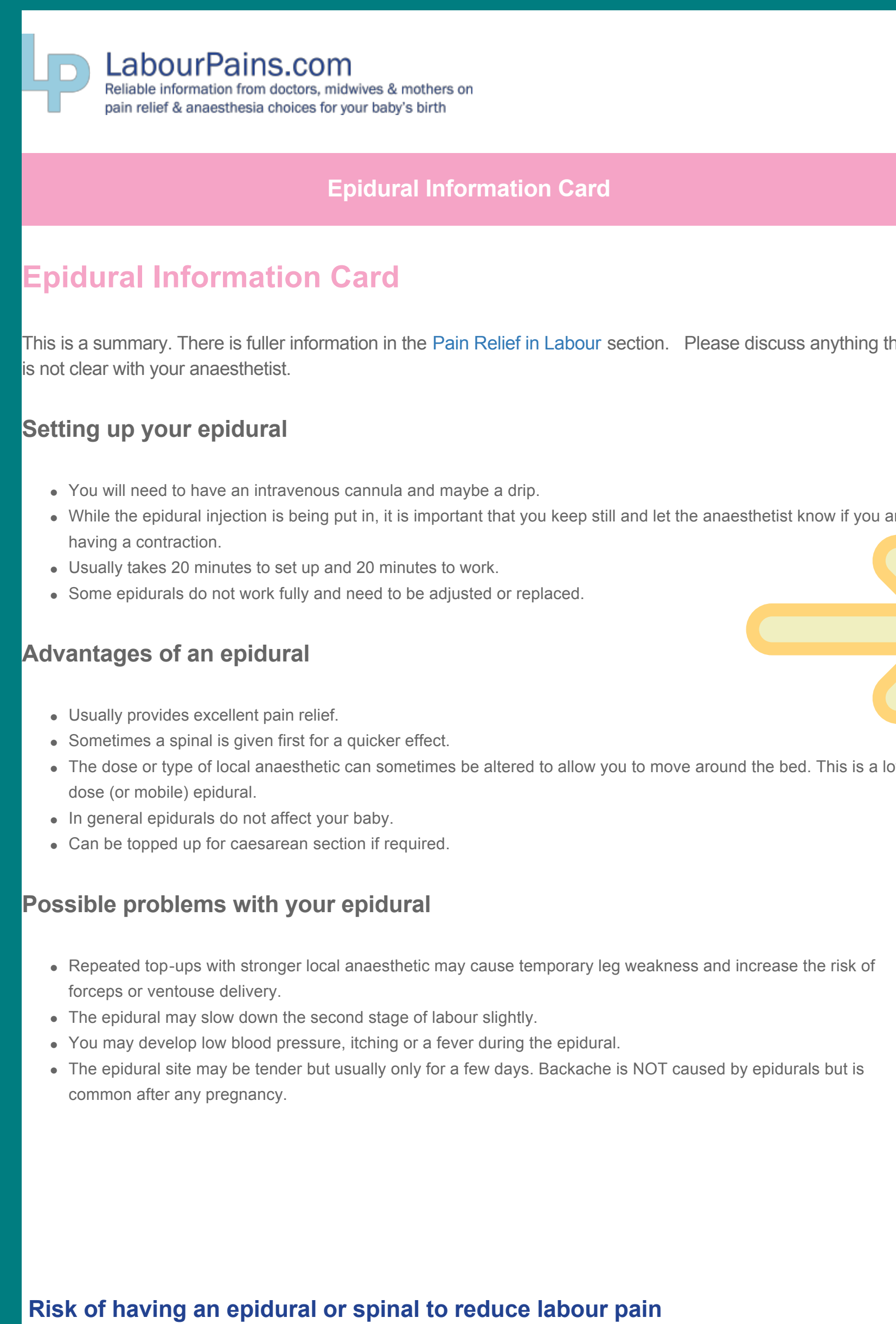
An exciting development within our Trust since this project commenced, is the pilot of a dedicated obstetric antenatal clinic for the East Timorese community. This opens scope for further translation of key information and improvement of patient experience and safety.

Discussion

The aim of this project is to have an option to improve understanding of anaesthetic options in an urgent situation. We have no intention of replacing the vital role of an in-person interpreter for consent and communication in the obstetric environment. As a supplementation, we feel that written information is an equity improvement for this unique group of patients.

References

- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. Country of birth - intermediate detail MS-A17. Census 2021
- LabourPains (2021) Epidural Information Card. Available at: <https://www.labourpains.com/Epidural-Information-Card> (Accessed 18 April 2023)



Key points

- The East Timorese community in the UK have a significant concentration within the Southern Trust catchment area
- Formal in-person interpreters are becoming more available for this community within Northern Ireland, but emergency tele-interpreter services do not yet exist
- Our project is a first step in providing a basic level of emergency literature to improve equity in awareness of labour analgesia options
- We hope that the literature translations can be made available on a regional and national open source basis
- Scope exists for future translations of the caesarean section information and possibly for audiovisual information



In numbers:

388,688

Population served by SHSCT

20,000

Estimate of the East Timorese population resident in UK

5000

Annual deliveries within SHSCT

2,874

Estimate of the East Timorese population resident within SHSCT