

‘Ask the Anaesthetist’ - evaluating a multidisciplinary online antenatal patient information platform

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Introduction

Timely and accurate information is essential in enabling patients to make informed choices about their labour analgesia. Evidence suggests information given to antenatal patients relating to obstetric analgesia and anaesthesia is often lacking [1]. A multidisciplinary online platform called ‘Ask the Anaesthetist’ was launched in 2021 by a consultant anaesthetist and consultant midwife at St George’s Hospital in London. This monthly forum encourages antenatal patients and their partners to ask questions to an anaesthetist and midwife to get information about pain relief in labour and birth experience in theatre

Methods

A survey link was provided at the end of each monthly ‘Ask the Anaesthetist’ session for attendees to evaluate the usefulness of the session in answering their questions about pain relief in labour and birth experience in theatre. Further questions to gauge ongoing sustainability of this platform included ascertaining if attendees would recommend the session to others. Approval from the Caldicott Guardian to publish the survey results was not required



Image 1: schematic used as part of the ‘Ask the Anaesthetist’ advertising campaign

References

1. Brinkler R, Edwards Z, Abid S et al. A survey of antenatal and peripartum provision of information on analgesia and anaesthesia. *Anaesthesia* 2019; 74: 1101-11

Results

- 30 patient responses
- 70% deemed the session extremely useful
- 80% were extremely likely to recommend the session to others
- Qualitative responses:
 - “We received detailed answers to our questions”
 - “I now have a better understanding of what to expect with delivery”
 - “Really helpful and put us at ease”
 - “An extra benefit was meeting some of the midwives and doctors at St George’s”
 - “Made it easy to ask questions and their approach inspired confidence”
 - “The session was very informative, which puts me at ease for labour and not be so anxious”

Discussion

This survey has demonstrated how successful this multidisciplinary platform is for expectant parents to guide their understanding and choices relating to obstetric analgesia and anaesthesia. ‘Ask the Anaesthetist’ has the potential to be expanded across other maternity units around the UK as a way of delivering personalised antenatal information from experts in the field