QUALITATIVE REPORT

Enhancing Antenatal Knowledge & Postnatal Safety

A qualitative evaluation of antenatal epidural education and postnatal escalation pathways

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STUDY SNAPSHOT (n=23)

87%	First epidural experience
70%	Induced labour
10	Ethnic groups
20–42	Age range (years)

OAA Annual Scientific Meeting 2026

BACKGROUND

Epidurals are common in labour, but consent often happens during pain and stress, **limiting understanding.** Knowledge gaps may delay recognition of complications after birth.

METHODS

Design: Semi-structured postpartum interviews (n=23)

Analysis: Inductive thematic analysis → 6 codebooks → 5 themes

Ethics: Local QI Committee approved (Project ID 187)

KEY TAKEAWAY

Early information leads to safer, confident recovery.

01 Antenatal knowledge shaped by informal Sources

"I knew it involved sticking a needle in your spine, which sounds like a horror thing, but that's about it."

- Reliance on peers & NCT classes
- Inconsistent, biased info common

02 Timing & format determine understanding

"If I'd first heard about epidurals during labour, I wouldn't have had time to think."

- Prefer early, visual, multimodal education
- Late-labour consent poorly retained

03 Preparedness enables calm consent

"Because I'd read beforehand, nothing he said felt new."

- Prior awareness = confidence & shared decisions
- Knowledge gaps → ceding choice to others

04 Postnatal uncertainty & missed follow-up

"Not having that guidance, I felt a bit lost."

- Few received epidural-specific postnatal guidance
- Desire for neurological symptom review

05 Desire for red flag guidance & digital support

"If something came through that was just a question and if you have answered X … call this number"

- App-based monitoring prompts valued
- Direct access to anaesthetic expertise

PATIENT JOURNEY & PROPOSED ESCALATION PATHWAY

ANTENATAL EDUCATION
Videos · Virtual links to approved information

LABOUR & CONSENT
Informed, calm decision-making

POST-BIRTH 48H CHECK
App notification & symptom check

RED FLAG RECOGNITION

ESCALATE SAFELY
Notify anaesthetist on-call

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Integrate epidural teaching into antenatal appointments - direct links to information
- Provide clear digital red-flag symptom checklist
- App-enabled 48h postpartum follow-up for symptom screening
- Aligns with NHSE consent standards & OAA Safe Anaesthesia advocacy

CONCLUSION

Anticipatory, consistent antenatal information empowers patients and enhances consent quality. Embedding multimodal education and digital escalation prompts may standardise epidural follow-up and reduce avoidable harm.

1. Nitzani D et al. Patient perception of consent processes for epidural analgesia. Anaesthesia. 2025 | 2. OAA & RCOG. Good Practice in Consent for Anaesthetic Procedures in Obstetrics. 2023 | 3. Braun V, Clarke V. Thematic Analysis in Psychology. Qual Res Psychol 2006; 3(2): 77–101