

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)

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

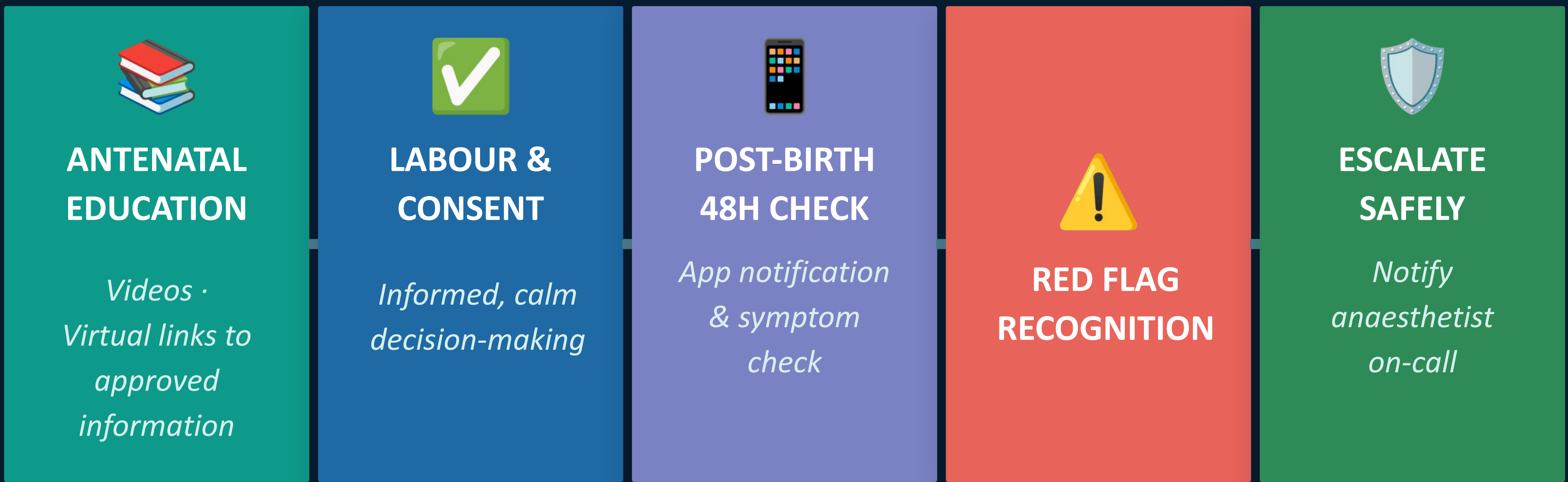
05

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



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.