

Improving Ultrasound Surveillance for Fetal Growth Restriction (Saving Babies' Lives)

Josephine Holleran, Robin Hughes, Debbie Scott, Jacqueline Tang (York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals, UK)

Introduction

In March 2019, NHS England introduced the updated Saving Babies' Lives Care Bundle (SBLCBv2) which places particular emphasis upon the detection and surveillance of fetal growth restriction (FGR).

Since 2015, York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has faced immense challenges including limited ultrasound scanning capacity (reaching 98%), sonographer staff shortages, limited antenatal clinic spaces and financial constraints.

Objective

Development of a practical strategy for implementing the ultrasound scanning requirements of SBLCBv2 for detection and surveillance of FGR.

Method

A multimodal approach addressing staff recruitment and training in conjunction with new pathways for the provision and management of ultrasound scans.

1. Dedicated midwife for SBLCBv2 implementation.
2. Feasibility study including a projection of scan needs and requisite workforce capacity
3. Temporarily increasing weekend scanning services whilst investing in ultrasound equipment (addressing sustainability)
4. Expansion of workforce (recruitment and retention through financial incentives)
5. Upskilling the workforce (training midwife sonographers and supporting existing sonographers in UtAD assessment)

6. Development of clear guidance to support healthcare professionals in the interpretation and management of abnormal growth scans
7. Increasing antenatal clinic capacity to accommodate reviews of abnormal scan findings generated through additional third-trimester screening

Results

1. A feasibility study projected that between 3,189 and 4,454 additional growth scans and approximately 1,256 additional UtAD scans will be required per annum across the Trust.
2. This equates to approximately 73 additional growth scans per week (UtAD scans will be added to existing second-trimester anomaly scans).
3. Full implementation was introduced in November 2021, supported by additional scanning lists and consultant-led clinics.

Conclusion

Through a collaborative multimodal strategic approach, York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals has enhanced existing antenatal care in line with SBLCBv2. It is anticipated that this will facilitate improved perinatal outcomes and a decline in stillbirth rates.