

Antenatal Folic Acid, Are we giving the correct dose?

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Objective:

Folic acid (FA) is a synthetic form of vitamin B9, human being cannot make folate, making it essential nutrient. National recommendation from NICE and RCOG is commencing FA 400 mcg daily at least one month before conception and until end of the first trimester. Certain group of women require higher dose of FA (5 mg/day), those who have: diabetes, BMI of ≥ 30 , epilepsy, haemoglobinopathies, previous baby affected with neural tube defect (NTDs), inflammatory bowel disease, taking mental health medications and one of the parents has NTDs.

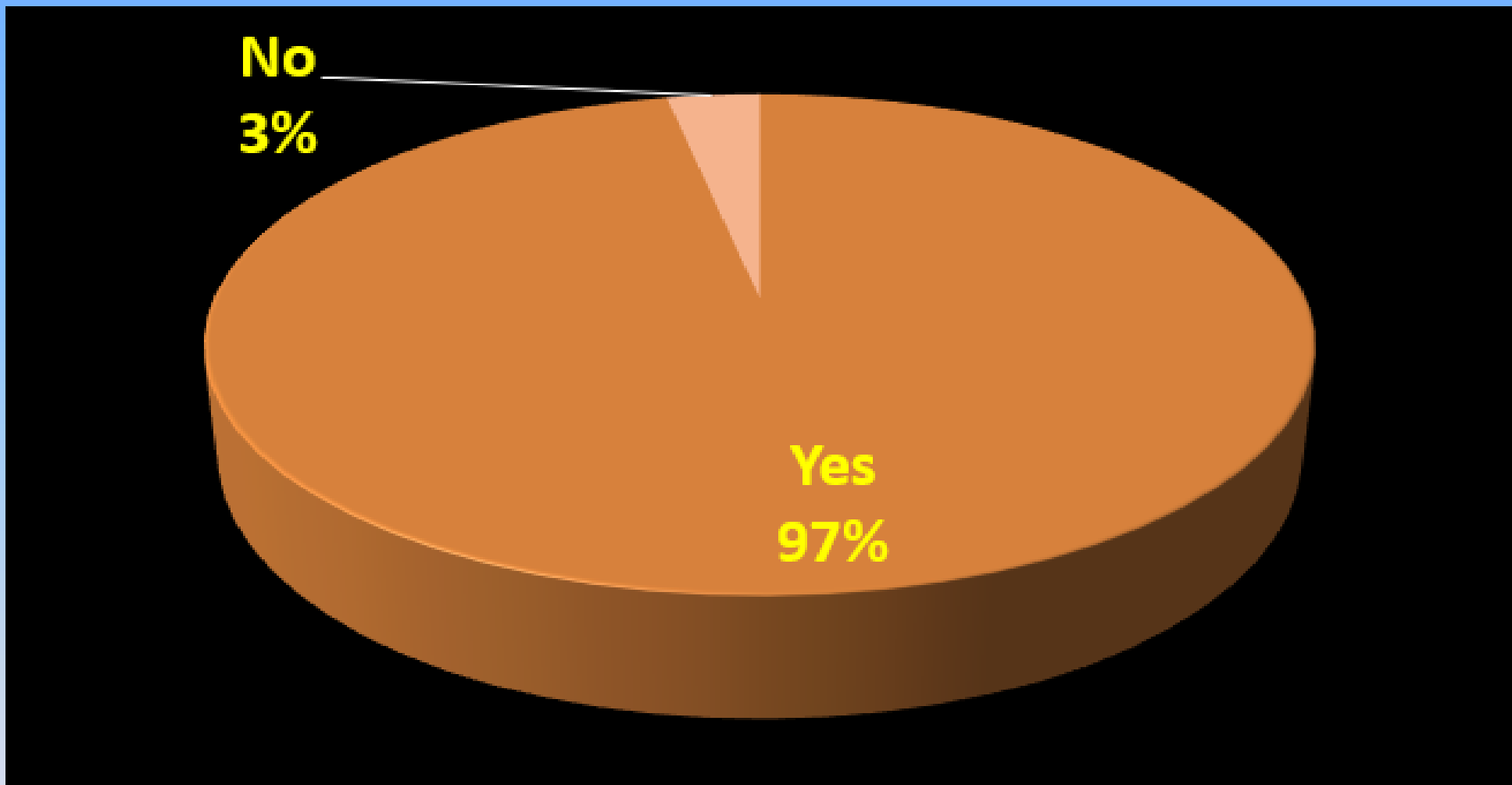
Antenatal FA policy has helped to reduced the risk of fetal NTDs by 72%.

10 – 20 fold increase of AF requirements in pregnancy and FA deficiency has adverse perinatal outcome like NTDs, cardiovascular defects and oral clefts. International policy of food fortification with FA and FA supplementation has helped reduction in spina bifida by 30% as well as 28% and 23% reduction in congenital heart defects and autism respectively.

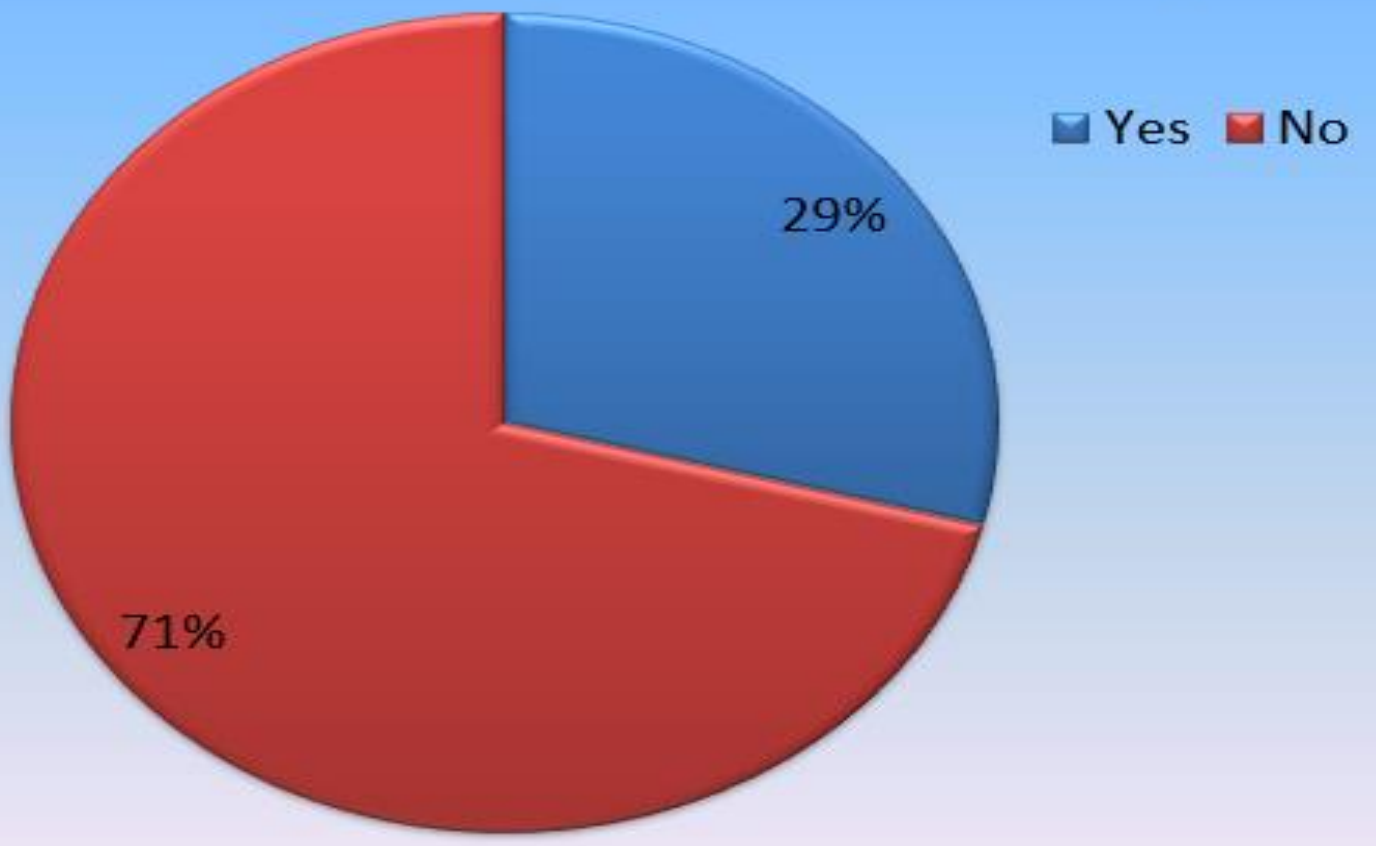
Design:

A prospective audit from 1st May – 15th June 2021 to assess the practice against national recommendations. 31 women were questioned about FA consumption preconceptionally and antenatally.

Folic acid discussed @ Booking



Folic acid started peri-conceptual



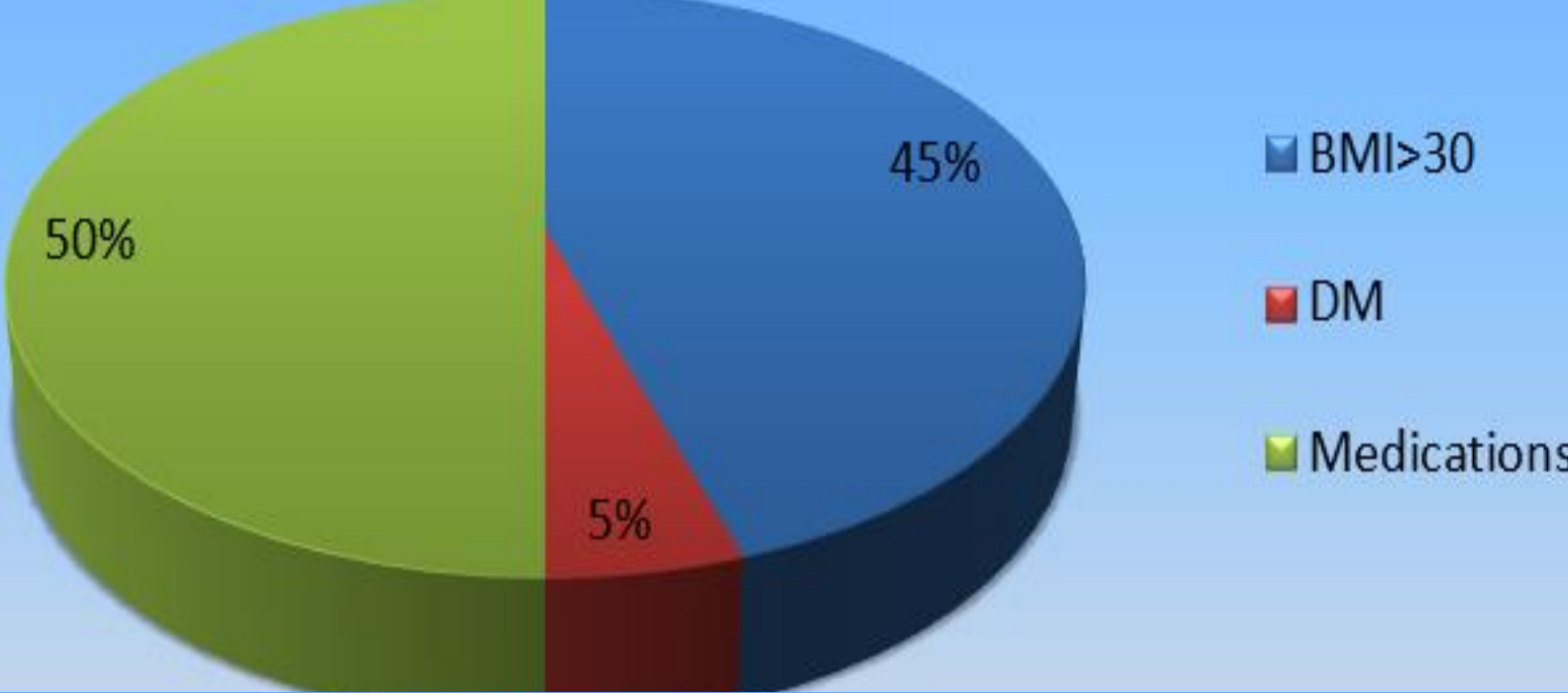
Results:

97% of women stated FA was discussed at booking and only 29% of women indicated that they were commencing FA prior to the conception.

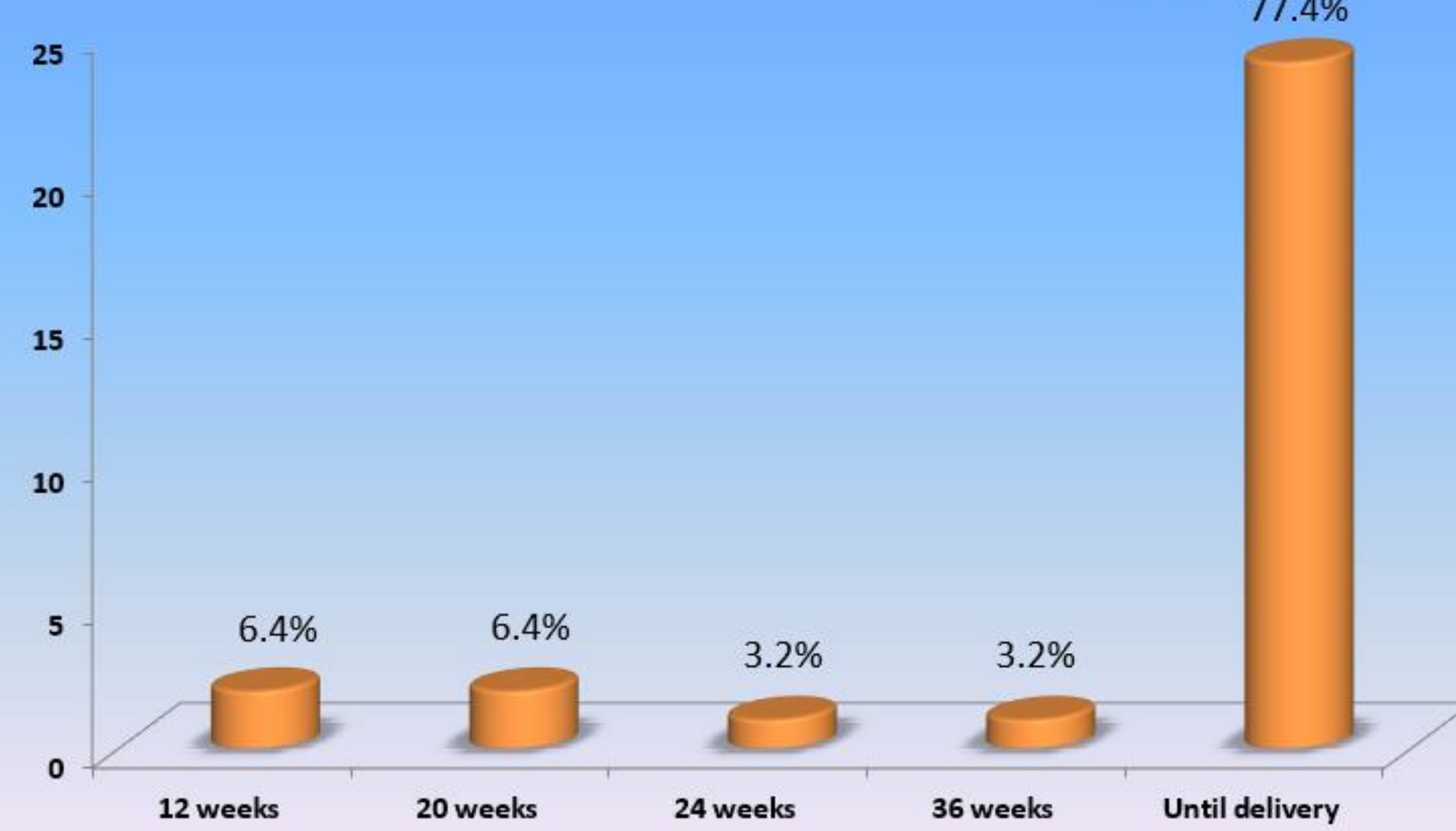
63% of women were at high risk group (45% had BMI > 30, 5% of women were diabetic and 50% were taking mental health medications) was noted they were not taking the correct dose.

6.4% of women stopped taking FA at less than 12 weeks gestation while 77.4% were continue taking FA until end of the pregnancy.

Indications 5 mg Folic acid



Gestation folic acid stopped



Conclusions:

Our practice was compliance with FA discussed at booking but we were not following the national recommendations by giving the correct dose to high risk antenatal women.

It was recommended that the midwives and the obstetricians to take every opportunities antenatally to advise women regarding the correct dose.

Letters were sent to the General Practitioners to advice women regarding commencing FA pre-conceptionally

At end of 2021, the UK Government has announced introduction the mandatory fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with FA and this is a major public health initiative that will positively lead to a reduction in NTDs and also reducing the risks of other diseases of pregnancy, like fetal growth restriction.