



Fetal Movement Awareness: Reducing Stillbirth in Scotland

Aim

The Maternity and Children Quality Improvement Collaborative (MCQIC) is one of a number of programmes under way across Scotland which aims to reduce the rate of stillbirth. In 2012, 274 babies were stillborn in Scotland (rate of 4.7 per 1000 births).¹ A key aim of MCQIC is to reduce the Scottish rate of stillbirth by 15%.

The cause of stillbirth is complex, but it is recognised that the need to monitor fetal movement throughout pregnancy is an important health message for women. MCQIC set an aim that by December 2015, 95% of all pregnant women would have a documented discussion with a midwife about fetal movement between weeks 18 and 24 of pregnancy.

Methods

Test teams were given tools to support measurement which included a sampling strategy, tools to display data in time sequence and a clear definition of a fetal movement discussion. The discussion with women highlighted:

- (1) the importance of being aware of your baby's fetal movements, and that every baby's movements are unique
- (2) to contact the maternity unit immediately if fetal movements decrease or stop, and
- (3) the link between fetal movement and fetal wellbeing, and that a decrease or cessation of fetal movement may be associated with the risk of stillbirth.

Baseline data was collected from maternity notes on a monthly basis from March 2014 onwards. Using the Model for Improvement, maternity teams tested ideas on a small scale and collected data to confirm if the changes resulted in an improvement.

Outcomes/Results

National aggregated data from 12 of 17 teams which have reported consistently from March 2014 to September 2015 show discussion of fetal movement improved by 11% from the baseline period, but deterioration in late 2015 suggests further work is needed (Figure 1).

Local level data from the Pennywell team, NHS Lothian, shows how the process has improved by 21% from baseline (Figure 2). In 2014, 228 babies were stillborn, a 14.89% reduction in the rate of stillbirth compared to 2012 (rate of 4 per 1000 births) (Figure 3).¹

Conclusions

Although no one factor can be attributed to the reduction, it is encouraging that the rate of stillbirth is now at the lowest level ever recorded in Scotland.

Reference:

1. National Records of Scotland Vital events reference tables 2014. Available at www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/general-publications/vital-events-reference-tables/2014/section-4-stillbirths-and-infant-deaths

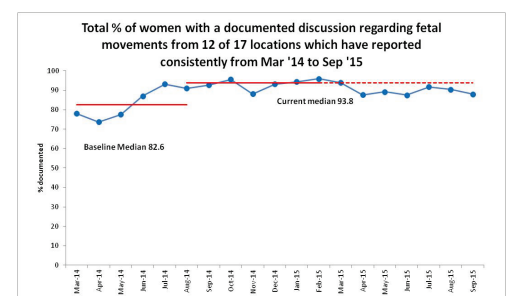


Figure 1: Women with a documented discussion about fetal movements from 12 sites reporting consistently

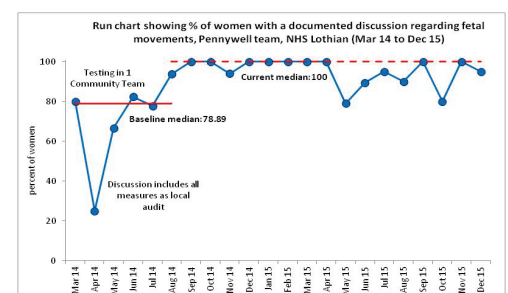


Figure 2: Women with a documented discussion about fetal movements in NHS Lothian

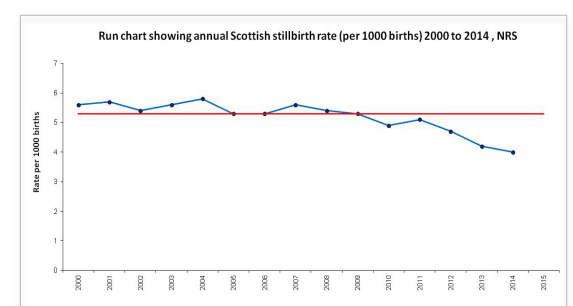


Figure 3: Scottish stillbirth rate