

JANUARY 2011

Sands involved in new research team to understand why mothers and babies die

Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity, will give the parent perspective to a new national health programme focusing on preventing deaths and improving outcomes for mothers and babies in the UK.

The new team based in Oxford will lead the national Maternal and Newborn Clinical Outcomes Review Programme from April 2011, a body of work commissioned by the National Patient Safety Agency.

The programme will investigate the deaths of women and their babies during or after childbirth, and cases where women and their offspring survive serious illness during pregnancy or after childbirth.

The remit of the new team will incorporate the Confidential Enquiries into Maternal and Newborn Health, a programme of work which aims to look at avoidable factors in the deaths of mothers and babies.

“Every day in the UK 17 families are devastated by the death of their baby either before or soon after they are born,” says Neal Long, chief executive at Sands. “The stillbirth rate in the UK has remained largely unchanged over the past decade. With an increasing birth rate and an increasingly complex pregnancy population, the risks of a baby being stillborn or dying shortly after birth cannot be ignored.

“We believe some of these deaths are potentially avoidable and we are extremely keen to bring the parent perspective to this important work in understanding why some babies die.”

Almost one in every 100 births in the UK leads to a stillbirth or newborn death and up to 100 women die every year during or just after pregnancy.

Every year 500 babies die as a result of events in labour. Since 1995, 61% of all clinical negligence payments to the NHS have related to claims arising out of birth. The total cost of maternity claims in 2007/8 was £163 million. Of any group of individuals being cared for under the NHS, these baby deaths and illnesses are arguably some of the most avoidable of all.

Experts involved in the new team hope to prevent more of these deaths and those illnesses associated with pregnancy or childbirth, and improve maternal and neonatal care for all mothers and babies.

The Confidential Enquiries into Maternal and Newborn Health were previously carried out by the Centre for Maternal and Child Enquiries (CMACE). The Confidential Enquiries have led to major improvements in the health and care of women and their babies but medical experts believe instances of poor care still exist and further improvements can still be made.

The new programme, called MBRRACE-UK (Mothers and Babies - Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK), will be jointly run by the universities of Oxford, Leicester, Liverpool and Birmingham, Imperial College London, Sands, and an Oxford GP.

It will be based at Oxford University's National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit (NPEU) and will build on existing research projects, including the UK Obstetric Surveillance System (UKOSS) led by Dr Marian Knight at the NPEU, and the Infant Mortality and Morbidity Studies (TIMMS) led by Professors Elizabeth Draper and David Field at the University of Leicester.

Dr Jenny Kurinczuk at the NPEU will lead the new team.

For more details contact Katie Duff at Sands, <http://www.uk-sands.org>, T: 0845 6520 442 / 07554 454312

And:

Dr Jenny Kurinczuk or Dr Marian Knight at the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit:
jenny.kurinczuk@npeu.ox.ac.uk <<mailto:jenny.kurinczuk@npeu.ox.ac.uk>>, T: 01865 289700

Ends

Notes to editors:

For more information on MBRRACE-UK visit www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrrace-uk
<<http://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrrace-uk>>

Members of the programme team:

National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit, Oxford University: Dr Jenny Kurinczuk, Dr Marian Knight, Prof Peter Brocklehurst, Dr Ron Gray and Dr Maggie Redshaw

The Infant Mortality and Morbidity Studies (TIMMS) Team, University of Leicester: Prof Elizabeth Draper, Prof David Field, Dr Lucy Smith, Dr Bradley Manktelow

Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity: Charlotte Bevan, Janet Scott

The Neonatal Data Analysis Unit, Imperial College London: Prof Neena Modi

University of Liverpool: Prof James Neilson

University of Birmingham: Dr Sara Kenyon

General Practitioner, Oxford: Dr Judy Shakespeare

The National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit (NPEU) is a research unit at Oxford University established in 1978 by the Department of Health. The unit has expanded considerably in recent years and now has well over 80 staff including epidemiologists, obstetricians, midwives, nurses, paediatricians, social scientists, and information specialists. The mission of the NPEU is to produce high quality research evidence to improve the care provided to women and their families during pregnancy, childbirth, the newborn period and early childhood as well as promoting the effective use of resources by perinatal health services. Details at www.npeu.ox.ac.uk <<http://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/>>

The TIMMS team at the University of Leicester was established in the late 1990's. TIMMS run an internationally renowned programme of research investigating the causes, consequences and management of specific aspects of the morbidity and mortality of the fetus, infant and child. Research findings are used to influence policy, education and clinical practice in reproductive, perinatal and paediatric medicine. Details at www.le.ac.uk/departments/health-sciences/research/ships/timms/projects <<http://www.le.ac.uk/departments/health-sciences/research/ships/timms/projects>>

Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity, was established by bereaved parents in 1978. It is a national organisation, with over 100 regional support groups across the UK. Sands' core aims are: to support anyone affected by the death of a baby; to work in partnership with health professionals to improve the quality of care offered to bereaved families; and to promote research and changes in practice that could help to reduce the loss of babies' lives. Details at www.uk-sands.org/ <<http://www.uk-sands.org/>>

UKOSS is a joint research initiative between the NPEU and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, in collaboration with the Royal College of Midwives, the Obstetric Anaesthetists Association, the National Childbirth Trust, the Faculty of Public Health of the Royal College of Physicians, and the Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health, and is supported by the Department of Health. It is a UK-wide obstetric surveillance system to describe the epidemiology of a variety of uncommon disorders of pregnancy. The aim is to use this system to lessen the burden on reporting clinicians of multiple requests for information from different sources. Details at www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/ukoss <<http://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/ukoss>>