

Delivery of women with abnormally invasive placenta (AIP) in England: are we doing the best for our patients?

Background: There is considerable evidence that women with AIP have lower maternal morbidity if delivery occurs in an experienced specialist centre. This requires effective antenatal diagnosis followed by appropriate referral. Whether this is occurring in England is currently unknown and needs to be explored if the high incidence of severe adverse outcomes recently reported by UKOSS is to be reduced.

Methods: An anonymous email survey was sent to the clinician responsible for the delivery suite in all the consultant-led obstetric units throughout England (154 in total).

Results: 116 responses were received (75%). 40/116 (34%) do not routinely screen for AIP. 24/116 (21%) regard themselves a 'specialist centre' for the treatment of AIP. 32/116 (28%) stated that they referred their cases to other units. 60/92 (65%) of units do not regard themselves as 'specialist centres' but nevertheless plan to deliver them 'in house'. Over 5 years, the 24 'specialist centres' delivered an estimated 685 cases of AIP (approx. 6/year each), compared to 1067 managed within the 92 non-specialist centres (approx. 2/year each).

Discussion: The finding that over a third of units do not routinely screen for AIP is worrying, given that antenatal diagnosis is strongly associated with improved maternal outcome. The high proportion of units that do not regard themselves as specialist centres and have few cases but still plan to manage delivery is likely to result in substandard care. Centralising all planned AIP deliveries into tertiary centres increases experience with this rare condition and has been shown to reduce adverse outcomes.

Conclusion: The current rates of antenatal screening and referral of AIP patients to appropriate specialist centres is out of step with the evidence for its benefits. Routine screening for women at risk of AIP should be implemented in all obstetric units, supported by appropriate referral to specialist centres.