

Potential new cause of miscarriage and habitual abortion

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Fetal and neonatal immune thrombocytopenia (FNIT; aka FNAIT) is a condition in which fetuses and newborns have reduced numbers of blood cells known as platelets.

Platelets have a key role in blood clotting; if the reduction in platelet number in a fetus or newborn is dramatic, it can lead to bleeding within the skull, which can result in [brain damage](#) or even death.

A team of researchers led by Heyu Ni, at the University of Toronto, Toronto, has now identified in mice a non-classical form of FNIT that does not cause uncontrolled bleeding within the skull of the fetus/newborn.

Rather, the condition is characterized by excessive platelet activation and [blood clot formation](#) in the placenta, resulting in miscarriage. Importantly, the team identified two treatments that prevented this nonclassical form of FNIT.

Ni and colleagues therefore suggest that the nonclassical FNIT that they observed in mice should be considered as an underlying cause of miscarriage and habitual abortion in women.

Alvin Schmaier, at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, concurs with this suggestion in his accompany commentary and discusses potential ways to treat those women determined to have the condition.

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