

Scans could aid delivery decisions

April 16 2012

Scientists are using MRI scans to see if they can determine when best to deliver babies that are not growing as fast as they should in the womb.

The University study aims to see if changes to the placenta can indicate when babies that are not growing as fast as they should need to be delivered.

These babies should be delivered to improve their [survival rates](#).

If a decision is made to wait so that these babies can have more time to develop in the [womb](#) there is a greater risk of still birth.

But if these babies are delivered too soon there is a risk that they may have not grown in the womb enough to survive after they are born.

Currently, seventeen babies are stillborn or die soon after birth each day in the UK.

The study is trying to find markers to indicate when the placenta - a baby's life support system in the womb - is failing to work.

This would then guide doctors as to when best to deliver the baby.

The study involves using a technique called [spectroscopy](#).

This technique can identify proteins expressed by the [placenta](#) that could indicate whether it is working properly or not.

"If we find that the baby is small we either watch and wait or we deliver the baby. If we watch and wait too long, the baby can die before it is born. If we deliver the baby too early, not only is it small, but it has the additional complications of prematurity. If we have a woman with a baby who is small we don't have any treatment at the moment, short of delivering the baby. Delivering the baby at the right time is very important, said Dr. Fiona Denison, Senior lecturer in maternal and fetal medicine.

The study, which has received funding from the charities Action Medical Research and Tommy's will involve 50 women recruited over a 30-month period.

Provided by University of Edinburgh

Citation: Scans could aid delivery decisions (2012, April 16) retrieved 13 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-04-scans-aid-delivery-decisions.html>

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