

Study gives new hope for women suffering from recurrent miscarriage

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A team of researchers, led by the University of Warwick, have published new data that could prove vital for advances in care for women who suffer from recurrent miscarriage.

The recurrent loss of pregnancy through miscarriage causes significant distress to couples, often exacerbated by there being so few treatments available to clinicians.

The search for an effective treatment has been the cause of significant controversy in the field of medical research, centering on the role of [natural killer cells](#) (or NK cells) and the ability of steroids to prevent miscarriage.

Scientists have been uncertain about how these NK cells could contribute to a miscarriage and this has raised doubt over their importance in causing [pregnancy loss](#).

Led by Professor Jan Brosens of Warwick Medical School, the team found that elevated uterine NK cells in the lining of the [womb](#) indicate deficient production of [steroids](#). Deficient steroid production in turn leads to reduced formation of fats and vitamins that are essential for pregnancy nutrition.

This study, published in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, is the first of its kind to provide an explanation for why high levels of NK cells can cause miscarriage.

Siobhan Quenby, Professor of Obstetrics at Warwick Medical School, explained, "This work is really exciting because after years of controversy and doubt we have a crucial breakthrough. This means, quite simply, that we have excellent scientific justification for steroid based treatment to prevent miscarriage."

More information: "Elevate peri-implantation uterine natural killer cell density in human endometrium is associated with impaired corticosteroid signaling in decidualizing stromal cells" *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, 2013.

Provided by University of Warwick

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