

Priority Setting Partnership publish 11 key research questions to reduce the number of stillbirths

December 3 2015, by Lucy Prosser

New research led by Dr Alex Heazell, Honorary Consultant in Obstetrics, Saint Mary's Hospital, has identified 11 key priorities for research into the reduction of stillbirth and improving care for parents who have experienced a stillbirth. The research brought together doctors, midwives, parents, third sector organisations, funders and pathologists together under the Stillbirth Priority Settings Partnership.

For the first time, people directly affected by stillbirth have had the chance to provide their opinion in setting research priorities. The findings have been published this week in the *Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynecology* journal, which validates the importance of these priorities to the clinical and research community.

The Stillbirth Priority Setting Partnership was co-ordinated by Dr Alex Heazell, with the support of the James Lind Alliance and funding from Tommy's the baby charity, for which Dr Heazell is the Clinical Director of the Manchester Centre. The aim of the partnership is to ensure that future stillbirth research brings the greatest possible benefit to people who are affected by stillbirth, both parents and medical staff, by identifying what unanswered questions are of the greatest importance to them.

The gathering of information took over 18 months to complete with 574 people submitting a total of 1,272 questions, which were refined down to

48 questions of the highest ranking questions using a scoring criteria. These questions were then included in a final prioritisation questionnaire which was completed by 1,118 respondents. The final stage of the process saw the 25 shortlisted questions put to the expert steering group, to make a final decision on what the top-ten research priorities should be.

In the end the steering group chose a list of 11 priorities which included an emphasis on the content and delivery of health services including, optimal bereavement care, maternity care in subsequent pregnancies, and the role of mothers in responding to symptoms and signs relating to impending stillbirth. A summary document including the 11 questions can be found here www.stillbirthpsp.org.uk.

Dr Alex Heazell, who is also a Senior Clinical Lecturer in Obstetrics, The University of Manchester explains: "Research has an important role to play in the reduction of stillbirths. Our work has involved patients, clinicians, charity and other key stakeholders identifying priorities which have resulted in patient-centered research priorities.

"We hope that the questions that we identified will shape the [stillbirth](#) research agenda and act as a catalyst for future research and funding."

More information: The paper, 'Research priorities for stillbirth: process overview and results from UK Stillbirth Priority Setting Partnership' was published in the journal *Ultrasound Obstetrics and Gynecology* [DOI: 10.1002/uog.15738](https://doi.org/10.1002/uog.15738)

Provided by University of Manchester

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