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The impact of genital mutilation on mothers and babies

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UTS midwifery and public health researchers have led Australia's first study of the obstetric outcomes for women with female genital mutilation (FGM) and its impact on their babies.

Conducted in collaboration with colleagues from the University of Sydney and funded by the Federal Department of Health, the study is informing the development of an online FGM education package to equip health professionals.

Research Fellow Dr Angela Dawson from the UTS Centre for Midwifery, Child and Family Health said the research has provided insight into the care women and their babies require in order to save lives and reduce disability.

"Considered a violation of human rights by the United Nations, FGM is associated with adverse outcomes during childbirth and serious immediate and long-term physical and psychosocial complications for girls and women," Dr Dawson said.

According to the World Health Organization FGM is carried out on young girls and women in 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East, as well as some Asian countries.

"Although the practice is more prevalent in African countries, changing patterns of migration have made it more visible as a public health challenge in high-income countries including Australia," Dr Dawson

said.

"Our project aimed to identify the complications for women who have FGM and make recommendations, primarily to midwives and doctors, concerning culturally appropriate and clinically sound approaches to caring for pregnant and labouring women with FGM and their families.

"It also sought to identify the extent of FGM data collection in NSW and make recommendations to improve the quality of this data.

"The online education package for gynaecologists, obstetricians and midwives will contribute to the clear need for health professional education in this area. UTS is committed to supporting the capacity improvement of professionals to protect women and children from any type of violence, including FGM."

The package will be available soon via the website of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

The results of the study have been published this month in the journal *Midwifery*.

More information: "Evidence to inform education, training and supportive work environments for midwives involved in the care of women with female genital mutilation: A review of global experience." DOI: dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2014.08.012

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