Fetal Movement Monitoring: Practice in Australia and New Zealand

Background

- Regular fetal movements a sign of fetal well being
- Mid 70’s: maternal fetal movement counting emerged
- 1989: Grant et al. RCT of routine formal FM counting: no difference in antepartum death rates for singletons
- Recently some criticism of this study
- NICE guidelines: “Routine formal fetal-movement counting should not be offered ..” but another overview recommends FM monitoring in routine antenatal care
- Many obstetricians use kick charts as part of usual care
- Calls for a new study on fetal movement monitoring

Aims

• To identify current practices and views of obstetricians on fetal movement monitoring in pregnancy.

Methods

• A survey of Fellows and Members of the RANZCOG was conducted in October 2005.

• The survey consisted of a mail-out of an anonymous questionnaire with one follow-up mail-out undertaken three weeks later.
Results

• Response Rate of 63% (1066 of 1700 surveys)

• 805 (47%) currently practising obstetrics
Results

Which women should be asked about fetal movements as part of routine antenatal care, according to the following gestations …
Results

Do you use a KICK Chart as part of antenatal care?

- Yes: 39%
- No: 59%
- Blank: 2%
Results

What do you consider to be reduced fetal movements in the THIRD trimester?

Definitions of Reduced Fetal Movements (RFM)

- <3 movements per hour over 12 hours
- <10 movements over 12 hours
- <10 movements per 12 hours over 2 days
- Mother's perception of RFM over 12 hours
- Mother's perception of RFM over 24 hours

Percent of agreement: <3 movements per hour over 12 hours: 10%, <10 movements over 12 hours: 70%, <10 movements per 12 hours over 2 days: 60%, Mother's perception of RFM over 12 hours: 50%, Mother's perception of RFM over 24 hours: 80%
Results

Your management of reduced fetal movements in the THIRD trimester would include ….
Results (out of those who responded to the question)

Asking women to formally count fetal movements using a KICK chart …

Obstetricians views about the use of KICK charts

- Is helpful in routine antenatal care of all women
- Helps women to remember to notice fetal movements
- Assists in detecting IUGR
- Avoids unnecessary consultations for reduced FM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is helpful in routine antenatal care of all women</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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Results (out of those who responded to the question)

Asking women to formally count fetal movements using a KICK chart …

Obstetricians views about the use of KICK charts

- Is proven not to prevent stillbirths: 70% Unsure, 30% Agree
- Is only useful for high risk women: 40% Unsure, 60% Agree
- Results in unnecessary intervention: 50% Unsure, 50% Agree
- Is of no benefit: 30% Unsure, 70% Agree
Results

Would you agree for low risk women in your care to be involved in a trial of fetal movement monitoring?

- Yes: 68%
- No: 14%
- Unsure: 18%
Conclusions

- Despite recent NICE recommendations against formal fetal movement counting, it is a part of usual care for many obstetricians in Australia and New Zealand.

- Further research is needed to elucidate the role of fetal movement monitoring as a part of routine antenatal care and the appropriate management of women who report RFM.

- Obstetricians in ANZ seem willing to consider participation in a trial of fetal movement monitoring for women at low risk.