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Late Booking in Pregnancy

Document Author: Dr Louise-Emma Shaw

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1. Introduction

Antenatal care in the UK is associated with improved outcomes for both mother and baby, and conversely poor access to antenatal care is associated with poorer outcomes, including maternal death (71% of women who died 2014-16 did not have the recommended level of antenatal care). However exact data is lacking and variable, partly confounded by the varying definitions of 'late booking'. Ideally women should book with their community midwife by 10 weeks gestation. For clinical significance Swansea Bay defines late booking as 20 weeks gestation.

1.1 Early pregnancy Appointments

At the first booking appointment women should be given information regarding healthy lifestyle (including smoking cessation, diet and risks of infection with certain foods and activities), as well as expected frequency of visits, and any risks such as medical problems or previous obstetric problems that require specialist obstetric input. Antenatal screening tests should be offered in line with Antenatal Screening Wales Policy, Standards and Protocols 2019.

A dating scan between 11+2 and 14+1 is offered to determine viability, the gestational age and to detect multiple pregnancies (fetal number and chorionicity). Using ultrasound derived gestation reduces the need for post term induction of labour (NICE 2008)

Combined testing for Downs Syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome is offered between 11+2 and 14+1. Where this cannot be performed a quad blood test is offered between 15+0 and 18+0.

Anomaly ultrasound is offered between 18+0 and 20+6.

1.2 Definition for Swansea Bay B

For the purpose of this guideline late booking is defined as first scan of pregnancy with gestation of 20+0 or later. This is because screening can no longer be offered for Downs Syndrome, Edward's syndrome and Patau's syndrome, and the accuracy of dating the pregnancy reduces.

2. Action once identified as late booking

-Women should be booked under consultant led care

-Women should be given the same advice regarding lifestyle, plan of visits, and antenatal screening tests should be offered in line with Antenatal Screening Wales Policy, Standards and Protocols 2019. It should be explained that screening tests for Downs Syndrome are not offered after 18 weeks.

- Reasons for late booking should be explored. Socially excluded groups such as immigrants, substance misuse and teenagers tend to be over represented within the late booking population than the general obstetric population.

-Women should have serial growth scans as per the Health Boards Small for Gestational Age policy.

- Decisions regarding induction of labour should be made in discussion with a consultant obstetrician due to the inaccuracy of dating the pregnancy.

- It may be appropriate to have a midwifery led labour, and should form part of the discussion with the Consultant in the later part of the pregnancy (around 36 weeks).

References

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Maternity Services

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