

PRESS RELEASE

Lancet Series Report on Stillbirth

Following the release today of The Lancet Medical Journals Series of Reports on Worldwide Stillbirth Rates, it has been revealed the UK has amongst the worst rates in the world, ranking worst in Europe.

The report reveals lack of awareness and education amongst pregnant women is a key failure in the UK. <http://www.thelancet.com/series/stillbirth>

The charity COUNT THE KICKS™ are an awareness campaign working to prevent some of the 4100 stillbirths that occur in the UK each year.

Following a perfectly healthy and “normal lo risk” pregnancy in November 2009 the charities founder Sophia Mason called her maternity ward to report her baby’s lack of movement. Her baby was delivered Stillborn by emergency Caesarean Section on 27th November 3 days before her due date, her Umbilical Cord was wrapped tightly around her neck twice, and the cause of her death was officially registered as *unexplained*.

In the months following Chloe’s death Sophia, 33 from Guildford, set up the charity COUNT THE KICKS™ to try to raise awareness of the risks in the later stages of pregnancy. The statistics surrounding stillbirth and infant loss in the UK are staggering and among the highest in Europe - 6500 babies are stillborn or die shortly after birth every year in the UK, that’s 17 each day. 70% of these deaths are classed as unexplained.

The Lancet Report states 90% of Stillbirths are avoidable

“I believe Chloe’s death was avoidable, had I been aware of the risks we face in the later stages of pregnancy and just how many babies are lost each year. I would most certainly have called for help far sooner. I knew about the risk of Miscarriage earlier on but once we had reached our 20 week scan we thought we were safe. I attended NCT (National Childbirth Trust) classes to try to learn as much as I could to ensure our baby arrived safely, but was never told of the risks we faced or even the importance of my baby’s movements. I wish I had not listened to all the old wives tales about baby’s movements slowing down due to lack of space or because they are getting ready for birth, I am a well educated intelligent woman and can’t believe I did not realise something as simple as this, no one ever thinks it will happen to them, but it does happen.”

The stillbirth rate in the UK has not changed in over 10 years, “Awareness bares a huge impact in the prevention of deaths in all health risks, and it is just so frustrating that there is such a taboo surrounding the death of a baby.”

“Our aim is not to scare people, but like the Cot Death (SIDS) campaign headed up by Anne Diamond, we want to ensure parents are aware of the risks and are completely equip with knowledge, to ensure that if they did become concerned about their unborn baby at any point in their pregnancy, to call for advice from their midwife or maternity award immediately. Our campaign is not just about baby’s movements it is about following your instinct, your Mothers intuition. You know when there is something wrong with your child, even during pregnancy; it is just part of being a Mother.”

Awareness will save many lives

“We are all aware of the pressures the NHS’s maternity departments are under, we believe that if expectant Mums take responsibility of their own health and care throughout their pregnancy and work with their Midwives and health care professionals, by discussing concerns and attending appointments, by calling their Midwives or wards if they are ever concerned or worried and if they are unsatisfied to get a second opinion. A simple act such as having extra independent ultrasound scans or just researching inherent problems will empower expectant Mums. Many complications and hopefully deaths will be prevented.”

A simple solution

If you're worried at all – Make the call
Help your Midwife help you



COUNT THE KICKS™ produces stickers for the front of Antenatal Notes for all patients in the UK. The sticker, they hope will remind the patient to call for advice if she is worried at all throughout her pregnancy. With space to write the direct telephone numbers of her midwife and maternity ward. “It may sound very obvious, but when I was worried, at 4 o’clock in the morning, searching through my notes trying to find a phone number was the hardest thing in the world, I hope these stickers will help to reduce the worry and give expectant Mums the confidence to ask for advice”.

The COUNT THE KICKS™ campaign has been backed by RCM and RCOG also many organisations such as BOUNTY are helping to distribute the Stickers and leaflets. Thousands of supporters throughout the UK are raising money to help raise awareness. “We receive letters and emails daily from people who not only have lost baby’s but also those who feel our campaign has encouraged them to seek advice and now, as a result they have healthy happy babies in their arms.”

Why are pregnant women not told about risks?

There is always a concern that informing pregnant women of risks could increase worry and stress, however this could be said for any health issues such as Cot Death, Cancer, Heart Disease. These are all issues that have made huge steps in the reduction of deaths directly by increasing awareness “We believe by having the right approach to the subject, expectant Mums should not be scared, but empowered. We know we shouldn’t smoke or each raw egg in pregnancy, so being aware of risks later in pregnancy should be openly discussed and common practice”.

Following a reduction in fetal movements women should be advised to contact their midwife or hospital for further assessment.

The N.I.C.E. no longer recommend *10 kicks per day/hour* however they state **“Following a reduction in fetal movements women should be advised to contact their midwife or hospital for further assessment.”**

So how should a pregnant woman recognise a change in her baby’s movements if she is not routinely monitoring them? Why should this information be hidden from an expectant Mother?

COUNT THE KICKS™ hope doctor's surgeries, antenatal clinics and maternity wards will display their FREE posters to help raise awareness and teach expectant Mums of the importance of calling for advice, also that Midwives and groups will distribute their FREE stickers.

COUNT THE KICKS™ stickers and posters are available throughout the UK free of charge email your name and address to stickers@countthekicks.org.uk . These stickers and posters are being funded solely from donations and private sponsorship.

For further information about the Campaign and their aims visit www.countthekicks.org.uk or telephone 07951 880600