

Oxford AHSN case study

Theme/Patient pathway: Patient safety, Maternity and Neonatal

Unique midwife training programme improves safety for mothers and babies in low-risk labour



Overall summary

The Oxford AHSN has developed an innovative award-winning training package with consultant midwives at two trusts within the region. It is available to all midwives and midwifery students via a national on-line platform. The intelligent intermittent auscultation (IIA) interactive learning programme is the first to assess competency in intermittent auscultation to meet the requirements of the [Saving Babies' Lives version 2](#) care bundle for reducing perinatal mortality. Uniquely, it incorporates simulated fetal heart sounds, enabling midwives to accurately assess how the baby is coping with the stress of contractions based on what they are hearing. This approach provides reassurance around well babies and prompts rapid escalation and a move to continuous electronic fetal monitoring if abnormalities are identified.

What is the challenge?

Intermittent auscultation (IA) is a listening skill used by midwives to identify how the baby is coping with the stress of labour. It is the only means available to midwives who care for low risk women in labour to reassure themselves and the woman that the baby is coping with the stress of labour. It is a practical skill required of all midwives in any birth setting. A gap was identified in midwife training relating to accurately assessing competency in IA. The established model covered only teaching the theory and assessing knowledge. An 'intelligent' approach was needed to improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of midwives – and the safety of mothers and babies.

What did we do?

The intelligent approach was the brainchild of consultant midwives Christine Harding (Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading, pictured above, left) and Wendy Randall (Oxford University Hospitals, right). They developed the programme with patient safety and maternity experts at the Oxford AHSN/Patient Safety Collaborative. The OxSTaR Centre, the University of Oxford's medical simulation, research and teaching facility, played a key role in recording and integrated the range of fetal heart sounds.

An innovative training and education programme was created and added to the Health Education England (HEE) [e-LfH hub](#). It has been accessed more than 3,000 times. Supporting webinars created by the Oxford AHSN have had more than 1,000 views on YouTube and a short introductory video has been seen almost 8,000 times.

What has been achieved?

In November 2020 the IIA initiative received professional accreditation from the Royal College of Midwives.

At the 2020 HSJ Patient Safety Awards the initiative won the patient safety innovation of the year category and was highly commended in the education and training category. Eileen Dudley, Patient Safety Manager, is pictured with the main award.

In 2019 it won the Contribution to Midwifery Education at The British Journal of Midwifery Practice Awards and was judged the top poster submission at the National Maternity and Perinatal Audit/Each Baby Counts conference.



What people said

“Finally midwives now have access to a national training platform for fetal monitoring in a low risk setting. I feel the standard of training is excellent and (will) no doubt improve outcomes for babies but also confidence for midwives providing intrapartum care in low risk settings.”

Mandy Platt, Lead Midwife for clinical quality and service improvement at Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust

“It is already starting to become best practice and is clearly outstanding work that has already been well received by users and associated stakeholders. The project leads demonstrated a thirst for expansion and wider sharing of the benefits of the project.”

HSJ Patient Safety Awards judges



What next?

A [collaboration with eIntegrity](#), the global healthcare e-learning portal which works with HEE to deliver programmes designed and delivered by clinicians, was secured in February 2021. This opens up the IIA programme for international access.

We are starting to write up this work for publication and talking to experts about evaluation.

Contact

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