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Improving antenatal anaesthetic assessment and dissemination of information to parturients with a high body mass index

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Introduction

- Parturients with a **body mass index (BMI) greater than 40 kg/m^2 should be referred to the anaesthetic clinic for antenatal assessment**.[1]
- We assessed parturients' understanding of high BMI and the additional risks posed to them in order to improve their anaesthetic assessment.
- This has particular importance due to COVID -19 when most assessments have taken place over the telephone.

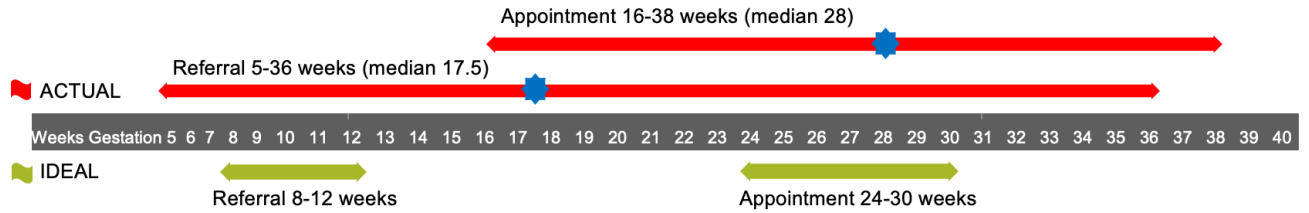
Methods

- Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association (OAA) **high BMI leaflet** was sent by text message one week before patients' clinic appointment with the aim to increase patients' knowledge base prior to the appointment.[2]
- **Survey** to assess patients' understanding of:
  1. High BMI
  2. Reason for referral to the anaesthetic antenatal clinic
  3. Additional intrapartum risks
- **Data** collected:
  1. Timing of referral to anaesthetic antenatal clinic
  2. Timing of anaesthetic antenatal clinic appointment
  3. Specialty of referrer
  4. Patients' BMI
  5. Patient preferences for information distribution

Results

- N = 21
- 9 week period
- mean BMI was 42 kg/m^2
- 71% patients understood the meaning of high BMI
- **29%** understood why they had been referred to the anaesthetic clinic.
- 48% patients claimed that they understood the additional risks due to high BMI
- 60% of those could actually comment on what those risks were.
- 62% of patients were referred to the anaesthetic clinic by a midwife.
- **23%** of referrals by a midwife were at the booking appointment.
- 86% patients had the maternity app for online notes and would like information leaflets to be uploaded there.

Figure 1: Timing of actual and ideal anaesthetic antenatal clinic referrals and appointments.



Discussion

- We recognise a limitation in case numbers.
- Patients' **understanding is generally poor**.
- Referral to the anaesthetic clinic is **not systematic**.

- We have **introduced several measures**:

1. A new electronic referral form
2. Information leaflets to be uploaded onto their maternity app.
3. Education of antenatal midwives to:
   a) Refer women at their booking appointment
   b) Aim for an anaesthetic clinic appointment at 24-30 weeks gestation
   c) Inform patients of the reason for referral at the time of referral
   d) Direct patients towards information leaflets

- We hope these measures will **increase patients' understanding and engagement** with the service
- We aim to re-evaluate once measures have been established.

References

1. OAA / AAGBI Guidelines for Obstetric Anaesthetic Services 2013. https://www.oaaanaes.ac.uk/assets/_managed/editor/File/Guidelines/obstetric_anaesthetic_services_2013.pdf *Accessed February 2021*
2. LabourPains.com Anaesthetics and pregnant women with a high BMI 2016. https://www.labourpains.comhttp://abstracts.oaaanaes.ac.uk//assets/_managed/cms/files/A4%20High%20BMI%20Leaflet.pdf *Accessed February 2021*