



Counselling for Down syndrome screening 15 years after the introduction of universal combined first trimester screening

Sarfo-Adu B, Deshpande M, Edge M, Steingold A, Aquilina J, Greco E

Department of Fetal and Neonatal Medicine, The Royal London Hospital, Barts Health NHS Trust, London UK, London, United Kingdom

Objective

Since 2003 National Screening Committee (NSC) and Fetal Anomaly Screening Program (FASP) recommend that combined first trimester screening (FTS) for Down syndrome is offered to all eligible women in England. These recommendations underline provision of high quality information to the women as essential prerequisite for an informed decision-making on screening and pregnancy options. Objectives: To evaluate the quality of counseling for FTS by using informed-decision making as a quality indicator.

Methods

Questionnaire-based quality assurance survey on a random sample of 50 pregnant women attending the maternity department of an East London NHS Hospital for FTS across a two-week period in January 2017. The questionnaire was designed as self-completing and included seven binary questions (True/False/I do not know) exploring basic understanding of FTS. Socio-demographic characteristics of the women were also recorded.

Results

Demographics were available for 48/50 women who agreed to participate to the survey. Most women interviewed reported over 8 years of education (73%) and considered themselves fluent or nearly so (72%) in English language. Overall, 49% of the questions were answered correctly, 17% incorrectly and in 34% of cases the answer was I do not know. Only three women (3/50) answered all the questions correctly. The remaining were equally divided into two groups, with ≥ 4 (22/50) and < 4 (22/50) correct answers. There was no association between level of education, English fluency, parity and number of correct answers.

Conclusion

Our data suggest that 15 years after the introduction of FTS in England an effective system to educate pregnant women and regularly monitoring quality of such system is still lacking.