



Media Release

06 May 2010

A message of hope for mums with empty arms on Mother's Day

A new guideline to improve the care women and their unborn baby receive during pregnancy offers hope this Mother's Day to all mums and families who have experienced the loss of their baby.

The Clinical Practice Guideline for the Management of Decreased Fetal Movement from the Australian and New Zealand Stillbirth Alliance (ANZSA) aims to provide clinicians in maternity hospitals with direction to improve the processes and outcomes of care for women who feel a decrease in their baby's movements.

'Approximately 1 in 10 women contact their health provider with concerns about decreased fetal movements during their pregnancy,' says ANZSA Chair Professor David Ellwood.

'When a mother feels decreased movements it is so important health professionals can provide an appropriate response, to avoid parent anxiety and/or a range of adverse pregnancy outcomes such as low birth weight, preterm birth, growth restriction or even death,' he says.

Approximately 2000 mothers who have had a stillbirth will be experiencing their first mother's day without their child, and for up to 700 of these women an explanation for their loss will not be possible.

'This guideline is an important resource as it contains a wealth of information and best practice recommendations which will assist clinicians to counsel women with DFM appropriately, and will aid them to identify women with higher risk pregnancies,' say ANZSA Secretary A/Prof Vicki Flenady.

This Sunday marks the second year Sarah Connolly must celebrate Mother's Day without her first born daughter, Vivienne in her arms.

On 31 March 2009, at 37 weeks and 3 days, after a healthy pregnancy, Vivienne suddenly and without explanation died, changing an expectant mother and fathers' lives forever.

'Floating lifelessly inside me, the silence and decreased movement in my swollen belly sent me to the hospital ward seeking the reassurance that would never come,' says Brisbane lawyer Sarah.

'I will spend Mothers Day remembering my darling daughter. I will read the card she helps her father write and open the present she helps him wrap. I will feel sad but forever grateful for the child I knew but never got to know,' she says.

'Every mother who has experienced a stillbirth will spend Mother's Day differently. However, it is so important we recognise their losses and that we make sure there are less women who spend this day without their baby in the future,' A/Prof Vicki Flenady says.

Providing women with information on decreased fetal movement coupled with the direction of a guideline for clinicians has been found to reduce the stillbirth rate in a Norwegian study .

ANZSA is a not for profit, member-based organisation which aims to facilitate collaboration between clinicians, researchers, parents and bereavement support services to reduce the rate of stillbirth, improve clinical practice, conduct high quality research, and raise public awareness about stillbirth. To donate to ANZSA please visit www.stillbirthalliance.org.au.

For media enquiries please contact:

Prof David Ellwood
ANZSA Chair
0427 600 028
David.Ellwood@act.gov.au

A/Prof Vicki Flenady
ANZSA Secretary
0419 664 956
Vicki.Flenady@mater.org.au

-Ends-