CMV Infection: Knowledge and Attitudes Amongst Maternal Health Professionals and Pregnant Women in the UK

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MMB Forum, Birmingham June 2017
What is CMV?
Congenital CMV is a common virus that can damage unborn babies

CMV or cytomegalovirus
(si-to-MEG-alo-vi-rus)
is a common virus that can infect anyone

2 to 3 babies everyday will be damaged by CMV

That’s almost 1000 babies every year in the UK

Most people won’t even know they have CMV but if a pregnant woman contracts the virus she can pass it on to her unborn child with catastrophic results
CMV is the leading preventable cause of hearing loss

- Some babies are obviously ill at birth (~15% of those affected by CMV)

- However, most will not show obvious symptoms yet account for 2/3rds of disease burden e.g. through hearing loss that develops in the months and years after birth
CMV affects more babies every year in the UK than other infections

Approx number of babies affected per year by pregnancy infections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infection</th>
<th>Approx Number of Babies Affected Per Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMV</td>
<td>~900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parvovirus</td>
<td>~500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickenpox</td>
<td>~250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listeriosis</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxoplasmosis</td>
<td>~20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listeriosis</td>
<td>‘extremely small’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxoplasmosis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rubella</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
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CMV risk reduction still not routinely discussed with pregnant women in most countries

CMV Action and St. Georges University set out to understand more about barriers in the UK

Survey, funded by CMV Action and facilitated jointly by SGUL and CMVA, developed to compare professional’s knowledge of CMV to other infectious diseases and risk factors in pregnancy as well as knowledge of prevention methods and attitudes towards prevention

Responses received from 79 Midwives, 55 GPs and 39 Obstetricians
Questionnaire Results

- Many professionals surveyed (60% of GPs and 40% Specialists) not confident in their knowledge of CMV
- They have better factual knowledge of other less common pregnancy issues
- 90% professionals (100% of midwives) believe pregnant women should be given advice about risk reduction
- Midwives that did know about prevention methods reported that they did discuss risk reduction

CONCLUSION:

The survey shows a clear gap between professional willingness to discuss CMV risk reduction and the knowledge they need to do so effectively
Key Findings: Barriers and Enablers

- 28% midwives, 36% GPs and 22% of specialists anticipated problems that would make it difficult to discuss CMV.

- Training and support needs - leaflets and study days/sessions were key themes - “it is about having the facts, knowledge and sensible advice to pass onto women and their families.”

- Issues of lack of time, causing anxiety, cultural beliefs, difficult messages such as avoiding kissing children, or questions about treatment, were cited as barriers but show a definite mismatch with women’s appetite for knowledge.

- Opportunities highlighted such as aligning with wider infection control messages or other pregnancy issues.
A UK Professional Development Strategy

- Key opportunity to take forward strategies to bridge the gap between knowledge, confidence and motivation by planning and implementing a professional development strategy in the UK.

- Working in partnership with clinicians, professional bodies, government agencies and educational institutions.

- Strategy based on key principles of:
  - Focussing on professionals working in ante-natal care
  - Developing partnership working and collaboration
  - Increasing engagement and finding efficient ways of meeting growing demand.
What Can You Do To Limit The Impact of CMV?

• Give advice on reducing risks:

There are simple ways a pregnant woman can reduce the risk of infection to her unborn child.
Look out for symptoms of CMV infection in mother

- Flu-like symptoms
- Lack of energy
- Fever
- Rash (though rarely)
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Enlarged liver/spleen
- Abnormal liver function tests
Look out for signs of CMV infection in fetus

Symptoms in fetus may be visible on scans:

- Intrauterine growth restriction
- Microcephaly (small head)
- Intracranial calcifications

However, if CMV infection has been confirmed in the mother, a normal scan does not guarantee the baby won’t be affected.
Look out for signs of CMV infection in new-borns

- Lots of very small (1-2mm) red or purple spots (petechiae)
- Larger (2-8mm) red or purple dome shaped spots
- Low birth weight
- Anaemia
- A head significantly smaller than other babies (microcephaly)
- Enlarged liver and spleen (hepatosplenomegaly)
- Yellow skin (jaundice)
- Pneumonia (rarely)

However, most babies will have no obvious signs at all
Further support and resources from CMV Action

- We supply our comprehensive information free of charge to professionals as well as families.
- Information about the latest CMV research and guidelines on our website www.cmvaction.org.uk.
- Our CMV e-learning module is on RCM’s ilearn.
- Poster of symptoms and actions to pin on the clinic wall.
- CMV Board Game for training purposes.
- Phone and email support for families from our support volunteers.
Thank you for taking the time to learn more about CMV

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