

The Obstetric Cardiac service

What is the Obstetric Cardiac service?

The Obstetric Cardiac service is a specialised service for women with heart disease who are pregnant, or who are thinking about having a baby. Women from across the North West of England, North Wales and the Isle of Man use this service. A large team of clinicians contribute to this service including obstetricians, cardiologists, midwives, anaesthetists, cardiac technicians and many others. The service provides preconceptual, antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care. The aim is to provide pregnancy focussed, woman centred care.

How does the service work?

The team run a clinic on Tuesday mornings seeing women for preconceptual advice, antenatal care and postnatal care. Most women attending this clinic will have an echo and an ECG performed before seeing the midwife, obstetrician (Dr Sarah Vause or Dr Anna Roberts) and a cardiologist (Prof Bernard Clarke or Prof Bernard Keavney). An anaesthetist is also available in clinic and fetal echocardiography and obstetric ultrasound can be done at the same visit. If women are admitted to hospital they are cared for by the same team on the ward.

Where does the clinic run?

The clinic is held in the Antenatal clinic on the ground floor of Saint Mary's Hospital, Manchester.

Who should be referred to the clinic?

Any women with known or suspected heart disease (or aortic disease) should be referred for preconceptual advice. Women already booked at Saint Mary's hospital who have known or suspected heart disease (or aortic disease) should be referred as early in pregnancy as possible. Women with moderate or high risk cardiac disease who are booked at other hospitals should be referred, although some may continue their care in their local hospital if this seems appropriate.

How do I refer a woman to the Joint Obstetric Cardiac service?

Please send a letter to Dr Sarah Vause, Consultant Obstetrician, Saint Mary's Hospital, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9WL or fax it to 0161 276 6143. Please include as much detail as possible. If you need to make an urgent referral please telephone 0161 276 6426 or contact Dr Vause, Dr Roberts or Professor Clarke via the hospital switchboard 0161 276 1234.

Pre-pregnancy counselling and support

A proactive approach to pre-conception counselling and education should be started in adolescence and this should include advice on safe and effective contraception and the importance of avoiding an unplanned pregnancy. Adult and paediatric cardiology healthcare teams should work jointly to provide care for young women with cardiac disease.

All women of reproductive age with cardiac disease should have access to specialised multidisciplinary pre-conception counselling to empower them to make choices about pregnancy. This should be in a joint obstetric and cardiac clinic. Women should be given advice about contraception and how to access services rapidly when they become pregnant. Pregnancy should ideally be planned and managed by a multidisciplinary team including obstetricians, midwives, cardiologists, nurses and anaesthetists.

The pre-pregnancy consultation should include:

Assessment

- Previous history including previous surgical interventions
- Co-morbidities – may need referral to other specialties e.g. genetics, haematology
- Previous obstetric history
- Assessment of current functional status (history, echo, ECG and possibly other investigations such as Cardiopulmonary Exercise Testing (CPET), cardiac MRI to facilitate provision of information about pregnancy risks)
- Assessment of potential risks of pregnancy – effect of pregnancy on maternal condition, effect of maternal condition on pregnancy.

Optimisation

- Optimise condition – medical, surgical or other interventions
- Lifestyle modification, folic acid and vitamin D supplementation.

Drugs

- Determine which drugs can be continued in pregnancy and plans for changing any which cannot be used in pregnancy. Some may need to be stopped or changed prior to pregnancy and the woman reassessed after stopping them.
- Refer to the Prescribing in Pregnancy decision aid for guidance <http://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/>
- Further assistance on drug use in pregnancy can be accessed via the Medicines Information Service:
 - medicines.information@mft.nhs.uk

Information

- Giving the woman information about the risks to her and the fetus (including morbidity and mortality)
- Discussion of risk of recurrence of cardiac condition in the fetus and the testing currently available

- Information regarding management of pregnancy and delivery
- Clear documentation of discussions/information given to the woman to facilitate her decision on whether to proceed or not with a pregnancy
- Information about appropriate contraception.

Access

Information regarding access to contraception options, termination of pregnancy (TOP) and how to access care when pregnant must be given.

Sources of support

Women should be made aware of sources of support. Women may wish to access support at any stage from the time when they are first considering pregnancy until after the baby is born. Women with heart disease may have difficult decisions to make and may not always have a successful outcome to the pregnancy. Women may find access to peer support helpful (i.e. British Heart Foundation (BHF) or the Grown Up Congenital Heart (GUCH) Patient's Association and should be given contact details.

Termination of pregnancy

Rapid access to termination of pregnancy services should be facilitated, if for whatever reason a woman chooses this. Multidisciplinary care will be necessary for some women around the time of termination of pregnancy. For women with severe forms of cardiac disease, it is important that the termination occurs in a NHS hospital setting, with the co-located facilities available in CMFT. The Whitworth Clinic, at Saint Mary's Hospital (Telephone 0161 276 6283) can provide this level of care.

The assurance that clinicians will be non-judgemental and supportive of a decision to abort a pregnancy is important.

Patient Support Groups for Women with Cardiac Disease

British Heart Foundation (BHF)



Website: www.bhf.org.uk

Grown Up Congenital Heart Disease (GUCH) Patients Association



e-mail: paula@guch.org

Website: www.guch.org.uk

Helpline: 0800 854 759



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