

## Protecting babies' brains with mum's pain relief

A study funded by children's charity Action Medical Research has discovered that a combination of anaesthetics not only prevents labour pains, but might also protect babies from brain damage caused by birth asphyxia – lack of oxygen around the time of birth.

Many different factors cause birth asphyxia, which can lead to brain damage and devastating, lifelong conditions for the baby including cerebral palsy, learning disabilities and epilepsy<sup>1</sup>.

Researchers at Imperial College London have recently published results from their two-year study in the online journal *PLoS One*<sup>2</sup>. The researchers believe that the inhaled anaesthetics xenon and sevoflurane might be able to protect babies' brains from the damage caused by birth asphyxia. Both of these anaesthetics are already being used safely to provide pain relief in other circumstances.

Lead researcher Dr Daqing Ma says: "Nobody has reported so far on anaesthetics reducing labour pain and protecting the baby's brain. This is a remarkable finding for us and we hope to take it further, from bench to bedside."



There is currently no preventative treatment for birth asphyxia. This baby was starved of oxygen at birth but protected from brain damage by cooling treatment.

1. **Yang T. et al.** Xenon and sevoflurane provide analgesia during labor and fetal brain protection in a perinatal rat model of hypoxia-ischemia. *PLoS One* 2012;7(5):e37020
2. **CMACE**, *Perinatal mortality 2008*, London 2010. [www.hqip.org.uk/assets/NCAPOP-Library/CMACE-Reports/36-July-2010-Perinatal-Mortality-2008.pdf](http://www.hqip.org.uk/assets/NCAPOP-Library/CMACE-Reports/36-July-2010-Perinatal-Mortality-2008.pdf)

## Baby Café comes to John Radcliffe Hospital

Britain's first teaching Baby Café has launched at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, in partnership with Oxford Brookes University.

The new Baby Café – developed by Hazel Abbott, Senior Lecturer in Midwifery at Oxford Brookes University – delivers breastfeeding education accredited by the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative. The new service is part of the university's drive for best practice around training midwives to deliver community support to new mothers.

The Baby Café will be used to teach and inform midwifery students about supporting breastfeeding women as well as being available as a drop-in for inpatients at the John Radcliffe.

Hazel Brookes, Senior Lecturer in Midwifery at Oxford Brookes University says: "The innovative dual function of this new Baby Café makes it a first in the breastfeeding world. We are thrilled to see the launch of the first service of this kind, which will provide both support and teaching opportunities, enabling women to initiate breastfeeding in the first few days and helping them breast-feed for longer."

To find out more about Baby Cafés, visit [www.thebabycafe.org](http://www.thebabycafe.org)

## Specialist Embraces a visit to Sheffield

A specialist children's transport director flew across the world to share pioneering ideas with his peers in Sheffield.

Dr Andrew Berry, director of the Neonatal and Paediatric Emergency Transport Service, Sydney (NETS), stopped off during a visit to Europe to discuss innovations with the Embrace transport team in Barnsley.

Embrace Yorkshire and Humber Infant and Children's Transport Service, which is run by Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust to transport critical care children around the region, organised a 'Night of Flight' event where the country's top transport specialists had the chance to network.

Dr Steve Hancock, Embrace transport consultant, says: "Dr Berry flew across the world to visit us at Embrace so we



Dr Steve Hancock presenting at the Night of Flight event.

made the most of his visit and expertise by bringing some of the top professionals from across the country to speak at an event with him."

Dr Hancock adds: "It was great to network and share the latest

advancements in specialist children's aeromedical transport, not only peers from around the country but from around the world too."

A repeat of the event is planned for the autumn.

## New parents warned of signs of childhood eye cancer

Every new parent in the UK will soon be warned about the subtle signs of a deadly eye cancer, thanks to a prolonged campaign by The Childhood Eye Cancer Trust (CHECT).

Retinoblastoma, a rare but life-threatening childhood cancer, generally



Retinoblastoma: often noticed in flash photography when one eye will appear red, the other white.

affects the eyes of children from birth to six years old. Until now, no public information has been available on the warning signs of retinoblastoma, meaning the majority of children are diagnosed too late to save their sight.

CHECT has conducted a year-long campaign, backed by Damian Hinds MP, parenting website Mumsnet and high street optician Vision Express, calling on the Department of Health to publish information on the signs of retinoblastoma.

Now the warning signs of this fast-growing eye cancer will be included in each new copy of the Personal Child Health Record (known as the 'red book' or PCHR), distributed to every parent in the UK upon the birth of their child.

Joy Felgate, chief executive of CHECT, says: "We are delighted the importance of this information for parents has been recognised and our recommended changes have been approved."

For more information see [www.chect.org.uk](http://www.chect.org.uk)



Morven Masterton, new Senior Projects Officer at Bliss.

## Bliss receives DH grant to further Baby Charter work

Bliss was recently awarded a Department of Health Innovation, Excellence and Strategic Development Fund grant to help it continue its work driving change and practice in neonatal units to ensure the best outcomes for babies and their families.

The Bliss Baby Charter Audit Tool is an assessment tool that neonatal units can use to examine key aspects of their service provision. Through the audit tool, Bliss hope to be able to share best practice and ultimately help units deliver high quality neonatal and family-centred care.

With a new, dedicated member of staff to assist with the tool, Bliss anticipates shorter stays for babies in special care and improved admission and discharge planning for parents. The audit tool will help units to communicate effectively with parents and families, providing local links and access for parents who may need additional support. It should also lead to an increase in breastfeeding rates and provision of facilities in units across England.

More information is available on the Bliss website, [www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk)

## Sands launches booklet for bereaved dads

Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity, has published a new support booklet 'Mainly for Fathers', written specifically for fathers whose baby has died at or around the time of birth.

The 40-page guide covers essential topics such as the physical and emotional manifestations of grief, telling siblings, family and friends, how to create memories of the baby and find support. It also provides practical advice on how to register a birth or stillbirth, legal rights and financial benefits, returning to work and the reactions of others.

The booklet highlights the thoughts of many bereaved dads, who were instrumental in its development. Author Judith Schott says: "Society generally expects men to be strong and supportive and many men assume that this is their role. But this can mean that father's needs and feelings tend to be ignored. We hope that reading this booklet will help dads both emotionally and practically in the difficult days and months following the death of their baby."



Mainly for Fathers costs £1.25. To order copies, visit [www.uk-sands.org/Shop/Shop-Home/Support-leaflets-literature.html](http://www.uk-sands.org/Shop/Shop-Home/Support-leaflets-literature.html)

## Improved care for children with cleft lip and palate

A new study has shown that the reconfiguration of NHS services for children with cleft lip and palate has improved standards of care. It has also led to a co-ordinated approach to national cleft research that has the potential to improve health and treatment worldwide.

Over the past 15 years there has been significant reorganisation of UK cleft

services, with a reduction in centres treating cleft lip and/or palate. A study by researchers at the University of Bristol, published in the *British Dental Journal*<sup>1</sup>, has found that this reconfiguration has initiated not only improvements in standards of care, but important developments in multidisciplinary audit and research.

Professor Jonathan Sandy, lead researcher and Head of the School of Oral and Dental Sciences, says: "Centralisation

has not only raised the profile of this relatively small care group, but also enabled a UK wide co-ordinated approach to research into cleft lip and palate. This process illustrates how NHS services can provide a platform for national research that has the potential to improve health worldwide."

1. **Sandy J. et al.** Using service rationalisation to build a research network: lessons from the centralisation of UK services for children with cleft lip and palate. *Br Dent J.* 2012;212(11):553-5.