

Every Week Counts - harnessing data to help clinicians and women decide about the optimal time for planned births

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Abstract Title

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Oral and poster abstract text

Background

Whilst the increased short- and long-term risks of adverse outcomes associated with preterm birth (<37 weeks gestation) are well-established, adverse outcomes for babies born in early term (37–38 weeks) have only recently become known. Such outcomes include a greater risk of being identified as developmentally vulnerable in Kindergarten. A baby's brain at 35 weeks weighs two-thirds of what it will weigh at 39 weeks, and every week before 39 weeks makes a difference. An increasing proportion of planned births occur at 37–38 weeks. Currently, one in three Australian babies is a planned birth before 39 weeks.

Objectives

To develop educational resources, using research evidence from population data, to raise awareness among clinicians and women about the importance of timing planned births as close to 40 weeks as is safely possible.

Method

Resources were developed with a commercial vendor to communicate evidence about the benefits and risks of birth at each gestational age from 35–39 weeks. Resources targeted clinicians and women. They were pilot-tested in two hospitals in 2018, and implemented in five more in 2019. A website was also developed (<https://www.everyweekcounts.com.au/>).

Results

The resources and website use research results based on population data and translate them into succinct and attractive formats. The resources have been well received by clinicians and women. Early website analytics indicate strong interest, including international downloads.

Conclusions

Translating complex epidemiological data into simple messages and easy-to-understand formats is facilitating uptake in clinical practice. Formal evaluation is yet to be completed.