

Australia calls for screening of women for heart disease after complicated pregnancies

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Women with complicated pregnancies are often unaware of their higher risk of heart disease: Study



Researchers from the University of Adelaide's Robinson Research Institute (RRI) and Flinders University in Australia recently conducted in-depth interviews with 26 pregnant women and found the majority did not know about the link between major pregnancy complications and risk of heart disease.

Major complications including high blood pressure, preeclampsia or gestational diabetes during pregnancy can increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease by two to three times compared to women with uncomplicated pregnancy – however awareness remains low, the South Australian study found.

Lead author Dr Prabha Andraweera said that the focus group discussions with 13 women with pregnancy complications and 13 who had healthy pregnancies were held at the Lyell McEwin Hospital to assess whether women were aware of this risk.

Matthew Flinders Professor, Claire Roberts, from Flinders University, noted that women who had experienced gestational diabetes had greater awareness of the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

“Our study shows that women want information and are keen to engage with postnatal health professionals to prevent future heart disease.

Feedback from the study found almost all of the women would be happy to attend a regular heart health clinic after their baby is born and many liked the idea of a hospital-based clinic because they were used to having regular visits during their pregnancy”, said Prof Roberts.