

GEMs offer brief updates from general practice research tackling the challenges of front-line practice.

Preterm Delivery and Future Risk of Maternal Cardiovascular Disease: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

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The clinical problem tackled by this research

Globally, preterm delivery (<37 weeks gestational age) affects 11% of all pregnancies, but data are conflicting whether preterm birth is associated with long-term adverse maternal cardiovascular outcomes. Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of mortality worldwide.

Some cardiovascular disease may be preventable through the identification of modifiable risk factors. There may be specific risk factors which need to be recognised in women, and which can be addressed in primary care.

What this research tells us about the problem

Preterm delivery is associated with an increase in maternal risk for future incident cardiovascular events, cardiovascular death, coronary heart disease events, coronary heart disease death, and stroke; this suggests that a formal cardiovascular risk assessment using established risk scores should be considered in these women.

This increased risk is greatest in preterm births that occur before 32 weeks in gestation, or in those that are delivered for medical indications such as foetal growth restriction or pre-eclampsia.

General Practitioners conducting postnatal checks with women following preterm delivery should inform women about their increased cardiovascular risk and give information and support lifestyle and behavioural changes to control their modifiable risk factors.

The research team (*GPs)

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Where you can read more about this work

Pensee Wu, Martha Gulati, Chun Shing Kwok, Chun Wai Wong; Aditya Narain, Shaughn O'Brien, Carolyn A. Chew-Graham, Ganga Verma,; Umesh T. Kadam, Mamas A. Mamas. Preterm Delivery and Future Risk of Maternal Cardiovascular Disease: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. J Am Heart Assoc. 2018;7:e007809. DOI: 10.1161/JAHA.117.007809

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