

CAF/23/05 - Multimorbidity and Adverse outcomes in Pregnancy – Scotland (MAP-S study)

Women are becoming pregnant at an older age and are more likely to have pre-existing physical or mental health conditions. We know that women with a single health condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure are more likely to have medical problems during the birth period and in later life. Having health conditions prior to becoming pregnant also means that a woman is more likely to require medication, more frequent hospital appointments, and blood tests or investigations. They are also more likely to have health problems around the time of birth, be in hospital for longer periods, and require readmission to hospital, all of which results in increased costs. Multimorbidity is defined as having more than one medical condition and contributes to poorer health outcomes and a higher risk of death.

Multimorbidity is well recognised in older members of the population but is increasingly seen in younger patients, including pregnant women. Recent data suggests that the prevalence of multimorbidity among pregnant women has increased dramatically with one in four pregnant women affected, but the information we have on multimorbidity in pregnancy and its effect on pregnancy outcomes is limited, is mostly from small studies, and primarily relies on patients declaring that they had problems with their health. The planned research will describe the types of health conditions affecting pregnant women in Scotland and whether certain conditions are more likely to co-occur with each other. We will investigate the influence of having multiple health conditions prior to pregnancy on the wellbeing of Scottish mothers and their children both in the time surrounding birth, and in the longer term. We will use routinely collected information recorded at each healthcare encounter to do this. These data will be held securely and anonymously in an NHS data platform. Only the study team will be allowed to see these data and no individual patients will be identified. Rather, this work will look at the pregnant population as a whole.

The results of this work will be published in research journals as well as on social media and other media outlets to ensure that our findings reach as wide an audience as possible. The team performing this work come from a range of scientific and medical backgrounds and have a long and fruitful history of working together. The team has all the necessary support and experience to carry out this project and have successfully performed similar research for the benefit of the Scottish public. We want to use the data freely and generously given by Scotland's people to improve health for generations to come. The findings of this work will provide important information which will guide the care of pregnant women, provide accurate information for patients, and inform obstetric care in Scotland.