

PE1602/C

Children and Families Directorate Response

Dear Stephen

Thank you for your letter of 4 July 2016 about Petition PE1602, asking for the Scottish Government to include ECGs and heart echo tests in pregnancy care for women in Scotland. Your letter was forwarded to the Child and Maternal Health Branch in the Improving Health and Wellbeing Division for response.

We recognise that Peripartum Cardiomyopathy (PPCM) can be a devastating condition and we are committed to reducing the number of instances of women developing it. I have outlined below current guidelines on the condition for the Committee's information.

We are aware of the risks associated with cardiac conditions during pregnancy. Maternal deaths from direct causes continue to decrease, but indirect maternal deaths from causes such as PPCM have remained at the same level across the UK. Coordinated action across a wide range of health services is required to address this problem. This is why high quality, relationship based antenatal care with a strong focus on prevention, promotion of health, early intervention and support as early as possible in pregnancy is vitally important.

The current international recommendations are that patients who are breathless during pregnancy should have an Electrocardiogram (ECG) and Brain Natriuretic Peptide (BNP) blood test and also an Echocardiogram. Moreover, the latest advice from the Scottish Heart Failure Hub, which has been driving improved management of heart failure in Scotland for 3 years, is that we expect clinicians in all Health Boards working in heart failure teams to manage patients in line with the latest evidence based recommendations in the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) Heart Failure guideline 147 published in 2016 (<http://www.sign.ac.uk/guidelines/published/numlist.html>) and also those reflected in the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) 2016 Heart Failure guidelines whenever clinically appropriate (<http://www.escardio.org/Guidelines-&-Education/Clinical-Practice-Guidelines/Acute-and-Chronic-Heart-Failure>).

You will also wish to be aware that the UK National Screening Committee has never considered a screening programme for this condition and has not been approached to do so.

Fortunately, cardiomyopathy remains a relatively rare condition. Based on current medical advice and national guidance on cardiomyopathy, the Scottish Government is not in a position to recommend ECGs and echo scans for all women during antenatal care. All healthcare professionals involved in the antenatal and perinatal care of pregnant women should follow the current guidance and ensure continuing dialogue with women expressing concerns during pregnancy.

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that all children in Scotland get the best start in life. I trust this will provide you with reassurance that we take this issue very seriously and as a government, strive to provide the highest quality care for all women, babies and families, from the beginning of the pregnancy onwards.

Yours sincerely

**John Froggatt, Deputy Director
Scottish Government Improving Health and Wellbeing Division**