

Name*:

Email*:

Phone number:

Address:

Postcode:

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or as an individual?

Organisation

Name of organisation (if applicable):

Position in organisation (if applicable):

Profession:

Please describe your interest in the questions raised by the inquiry:

Do you wish for your evidence to be kept anonymous? (please select)

Yes

Questions

1. Fetal development and activity - current state of evidence

(Please note if you only have expertise in one area of fetal development, feel free to provide evidence only for that area. For all evidence provided please provide citations. Please give fetal age in weeks from conception.)

1.1 Please provide an outline of the current evidence regarding fetal development and what age of development each milestone is likely to begin to occur.

Examples of areas that can be covered in this section: Fetal response to light, sound,

taste/smell, touch, noxious stimuli and the response that is likely to occur eg limb movement, change in pulse rate, adrenaline level, facial expression; fetal awareness and learning.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) Report, Fetal Awareness: Review of Research and Recommendations for Practice (2010), provides a comprehensive analysis of the research published up to 2010 relating to fetal awareness. The full report can be found at this link.

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/rcogfetalawarenesswpr0610.pdf>

The report was produced in response to a House of Commons report and a response by the Minister for Public Health calling for the RCOG to review its 1997 report into fetal pain. The report was developed by experts from a range of disciplines who were UK and internationally based, as well as involving women from the RCOG Consumer's Forum (now known as the RCOG Women's Network). The report was peer reviewed by experts in medicine, ethics, science and research.

The report presents research and analysis on issues related to fetal awareness and provides guidance for medical practitioners and information for women.

The RCOG Report, Termination of Pregnancy for Fetal Abnormality in England, Scotland and Wales, was also produced in 2010. This report makes reference to the issues raised in this consultation. Further information for women can be found in the RCOG Abortion Care Leaflet (2012) which can be found with this link.

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/patients/patient-information-leaflets/pregnancy/pi-abortion-care.pdf>

1.2 Please provide an outline of psychological, physical or behavioural examples of how life in utero might impact later life, whether childhood or adult.

Please see response above.

2. Fetal pain and use of analgesia - current state of evidence

2.1 Please provide an outline of the current evidence regarding fetal pain.

(Eg 4D ultrasound, EEG signals, fetal analgesia for surgery in utero, children with hydranencephaly, measurable physiological responses to needling, mesodiencephalon/CNS maturity, extremely premature babies (20 weeks) etc)

Please see response above.

2.2 In your opinion, from what age would you consider that a fetus:

(i) Is very likely to feel pain (>90% certainty of pain)

NA

(ii) Probably feels pain (>50% certainty of pain)

NA

(iii) Possibly feels pain (>10% certainty of pain)

NA

(iv) Is unlikely to feel pain, but is theoretically possible to (>1% certainty of pain)

NA

2.3 What reasons might a fetus have for experiencing more acute pain than an adult, and to what extent might this be experienced?

Please see response above.

2.4 As medical science advances and surgery in utero can be performed even earlier, in your opinion, what will be the earliest fetal age that consultants need not administer any fetal analgesia and give muscle relaxant only?

Please see response above.

2.5 In your view, what will a fetus potentially experience during these procedures performed under the current published guidelines in the UK:

(i) Dilation & evacuation (used from around 15 weeks of pregnancy)

Please see response above.

(ii) Feticide by potassium chloride (used from around 22 weeks of pregnancy)

Please see response above.

3 Views on the law, guidance and practice

3.1 Giving reasons, in your opinion, are the current guidelines (eg RCOG Fetal Awareness 2010) relating to fetal development and activity effective:

(i) For medical practitioners?

Please see response above.

(ii) For women requesting an abortion?

Please see response above.

(iii) For the fetus?

Please see response above.

3.2 Please make any recommendations for changes in the following areas that you think would reflect the current evidence regarding fetal development and activity:

a) Law

Please see response above.

b) Guidance for:

(i) Medical practitioners

Please see response above.

(ii) Women requesting an abortion

Please see response above.

c) Education

Please see response above.

3.3 Giving your reasons, do you think the current systems (eg RCOG/DH) in place that develop and review guidelines on issues such as fetal development and activity are effective, accountable and impartial to outside interest? Can you suggest ways in which the current systems can be made more effective, accountable and impartial?

Please see response above.

3.4 In what ways can you suggest improvements in reassurance to mothers requesting a late term abortion that their fetus will not suffer in terms of:

(i) Fetal pain

Please see response above.

(ii) Being born alive after abortion

Please see response above.

3.5 In what ways can you suggest to improve data collection and reporting on abortions (including, but not limited to, fetal pain and babies being born alive after abortion)

Please see response above.

3.6 In your view, are there any useful precedents for abortion legislation or professional guidance reflecting evidence on fetal pain, awareness and physiological responses from other jurisdictions?

No

If yes, please specify:

Please see response above.

3.7 Do you have any personal examples or experiences relating to fetal development and activity that you would like to communicate to this Inquiry?

Please see response above.

I

Inquiry into Fetal Development and Activity

to James, alisdair

20 MarDetails

FYI. What we received as a written submission (via the inquiry website) from the RCOG.

--

James Evans

Inquiry Coordinator

Inquiry into Fetal Development & Activity

w: www.fetaldevelopmentinquiry.uk

e: submissions@fetaldevelopmentinquiry.uk