

Using pharmacies to increase folic acid uptake in a deprived inner city area

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The Problem

- 50% pregnancies are unplanned
- Pre-conception use of folic acid is low in the UK (12 – 31%)
- Post conception use is higher (63 – 83%) but many women do not begin until after neural tube closure
- Folic acid supplement uptake is lower in the socially disadvantaged and minority ethnic groups
- Majority of women with type 2 diabetes in the W Mids are non-European and mostly live in areas of high social deprivation (2003-2003)
- Fewer women with type 2 diabetes (32.9%) received folic acid compared with type 1 mothers (45.4%) (2002-2003)

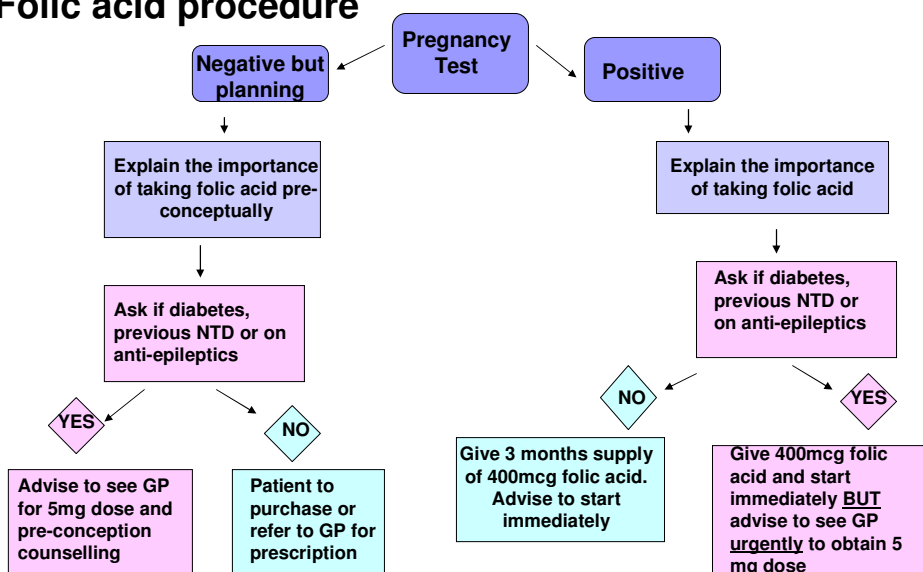
(Brooke & Doyle, 2001; Brough et al, 2009; Rees et al, 2005; Mathews et al, 1998; Sillender, 2000; Stockley & Lund, 2008; West Midlands Perinatal Institute, Draft report on Confidential Enquiry Diabetes in Pregnancy 200-2003, 2008)

The Birmingham Solution

'Pregnancy Fast Track'

- Initially funded by Neighbourhood Renewal funds (2007)
- Designed to improve on the low (49%) rate of women having first AN appt before 12 weeks
- Free pregnancy testing in 53 pharmacies in deprived areas of the city
- Women with positive pregnancy tests passed to a call centre resulting in a midwife contacting the woman within 24 hrs to do a medical risk screening (incl diabetes) and arrange antenatal booking/specialist clinic appt
- Free folic acid including signposting to higher dose for women with diabetes

Pregnancy Fast Track Folic acid procedure



Is it working?

Pregnancy Fast Track Scheme

- Mar 08 – Feb 09, 9132 pregnancy tests, 3709 positive (approx 1/3 of all pregnancies in the targeted deprived areas)
- Ethnic breakdown is representative of the multicultural population served

Birmingham Health & Wellbeing Partnership

Is it working?

Folic acid

HoB tPCT area – Survey of pregnant women (predominantly non-Caucasian) at booking visit:

Before the scheme 71% (276/391) took folic acid

Sep 07 – Mar 09 88% (1386/1574) took folic acid

17% of these took folic acid prior to 6 weeks gestation

Brough et al, 2009 – East London. 76% took folic acid (81% Caucasian vs 73% non-Caucasian)

17% took folic acid before 6 weeks of gestation (23% Caucasian vs 12 % non-Caucasian)

Stockley & Lund, 2008 – Systematic reviews for the FSA

Concluded: 'Health-care based initiatives can be effective and are more likely to be successful if they include making supplements easily available.... Include elements that specifically target vulnerable women'

Is it working?

Those requiring 5 mg folic acid

HoB tPCT area

- **Survey of pharmacists:**
40% response rate.
12% (131/1087) +ve pregnancy tests signposted to GP for 5mg dose
3% (32/1153) –ve pregnancy tests signposted to GP for 5mg dose
- **Prescribing data for 5mg dose:**
Oct-Dec 06 (pre- scheme) 2353 5mg folic acid items
Oct-Dec 07 2520 ↑7.1%
Oct-Dec 08 2611 ↑3.7%
Overall ↑10.8%

Summary

- Pregnancy Fast Track scheme is diagnosing approx 1/3 of all pregnancies in the deprived areas of Birmingham and giving out free folic acid
- The number of women reporting to have taken folic acid at the booking visit has increased by 17% to 88% since the scheme started
- 5mg folic acid prescribing has increased by 10.8% since the scheme started
- Cannot categorically prove that this improvement in uptake in a deprived, multicultural population is due to the scheme, but it is probably likely given that there have been no other initiatives

Thank You

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