

Update to Health Professionals

Quality improvements to screening for Down syndrome and other conditions June 2009

Many of you will be aware that the NSU is developing and implementing quality improvements to antenatal screening for Down syndrome and other conditions. The quality improvement process is progressing with support from representatives of professional bodies and consumer groups.

There will be two publicly funded screening options available which are endorsed by the NSU. These are:

1. First Trimester Combined Screening - a combination of the Nuchal Translucency scan and a first trimester blood test which includes two analytes. This option is available to all women who present in the first trimester, up until 13 weeks and 6 days gestation*.
2. Second Trimester Maternal Serum Screening – a blood test which includes 4 analytes (quadruple test). This replaces the existing MSS2 (triple test).

Both of these screening options provide improved sensitivity (pick up rate) and specificity (fewer false positive results) compared to those currently available.

Professional Resources

Some of you will also be aware that we are developing an education package to support screening practice. You may have been asked to review content as part of this process. The first two modules will be 'Screening Principles and Practice' and 'Quality Improvements for Antenatal Screening for Down syndrome and other Conditions'. These will be available via the NSU website during July. Modules for Universal Offer Antenatal HIV Screening, Universal Newborn Hearing Screening and Early Intervention and the Newborn Metabolic Screening Programme will be available during August.

We encourage you to work your way through the on-line workbooks as a continuing education option. We will be applying for continuing education points to be allocated to them. The workbooks will also be available to use as an information resource, and will be available free of charge.

Provider guidelines for Antenatal Screening for Down syndrome and other conditions are under development. These will support your practice and provide a desk-top resource.

Consumer Resources

We are developing consumer resources to support the offer of screening to women and their family/whānau and to support your discussion with a woman who receives an increased risk result. These will be available with the implementation of the new options.

Where to from here?

We are currently in the process of contracting for the provision of laboratory services. Once contracting is concluded we will provide you with a further update to inform you of the date that these options will be introduced. Keep an eye on the NSU website, 'News' section. We will update this to keep you informed of progress and notify you when the education material is available.

Go to: www.nsu.govt.nz for more information, or email us with any questions: screening@moh.govt.nz