

Ultrasound examination of fetal structural abnormalities at 12-14 weeks

Ultrasound screening for fetal abnormalities is conventionally performed at the 18 to 20 weeks of gestation. Recent data suggested that many fetal structural abnormalities could be detected by ultrasound examination at 12-14 weeks of pregnancy.

From February 1998 to March 2001, expert doctors from the department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Tsan Yuk and Queen Mary Hospital, the University of Hong Kong investigated the effectiveness of early ultrasound examination in the detection of fetal abnormalities in women of 35 years or older. In this study, 1609 pregnant women aged 35 or above were examined by sonography between 12 and 14 week of gestation. 53.8 % of the structural abnormalities were detected at 12-14 weeks ultrasound examination. Combined with the 18-20 week routine ultrasound examination, the overall detection rate of structural abnormalities was 76.9%.

It was demonstrated that the effectiveness of ultrasound examination at 12-14 weeks to screen for fetal abnormalities approached that achieved at 20 weeks and can be a good adjunct to the conventional examination. A larger scale multicentre study is undertaken in public hospitals including Princess Margaret Hospital (Operator 29901111), Kwong Wah Hospital (23322311), Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (25956111), Tsan Yuk and Queen Mary Hospital (25892100). For further information, please visit <http://www.hku.hk/facmed/press/>