

South Western Sydney Local Health District



Media Release

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Australia-first program protecting women with diabetes and babies

An Australian-first program aimed at reducing malformations in babies born to mothers with diabetes is set to begin operation across south west Sydney.

Campbelltown Hospital Director of Endocrinology, Professor David Simmons, said the Diabetes Contraception and Pre-Pregnancy Program, funded by South Western Sydney Local Health District with support from South Western Sydney Primary Health Network, would ensure women with type 1 and type 2 diabetes were aware of the risks surrounding pregnancy, that these risks could be reduced and the use of contraception until the diabetes was under control.

“The average chance of a woman with type 1 or type 2 diabetes giving birth to a baby with a malformation is around 4 per cent, which is twice as high as the rate for women without diabetes,” he said.

“But in this District there is published evidence that we are at 6.5 per cent of pregnancies, and in some areas as much as 11 per cent.

“This program will make sure women with diabetes who are of child-bearing age know they will require specialist team care if they are thinking of getting pregnant.

“The District has funded a pre-pregnancy clinic at Campbelltown, Liverpool and Bankstown; it is very forward looking,” he said.

The program has particular interest and importance given the focus of this year’s World Diabetes Day is on the one in 10 women who live with diabetes.

Professor Simmons, who is also the Professor of Medicine at Western Sydney University, said women who did not want to fall pregnant needed information about the most suitable form of contraception for them, while those who chose to get pregnant needed care from a multidisciplinary team, with early referral to the diabetes in pregnancy clinic as soon as they knew they were pregnant.

Similar programs have successfully reduced the number of babies with malformations born to women with diabetes in countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom, Professor Simmons said. Elsewhere, there have also been reductions in perinatal mortality and other pregnancy complications.

“Becoming pregnant with a high blood glucose tracks to poorer pregnancy outcomes all the way through pregnancy,” he said.

He said the program will include comprehensive information for GPs, pharmacists and patients including an informative app. GPs have already begun receiving information through workshops and have new online sources available with the support of South Western Sydney Primary Health Network.

GPs will also have endocrinologist support available, and can have one-on-one meetings to discuss any concerns about patients with diabetes.

The program has the support of Western Sydney University and the Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise (SPHERE).