Preventing stillbirth: What’s the latest evidence?

Further information and resources

The International Stillbirth Alliance

The International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA) and its partners carry out global collaborative work to raise awareness of stillbirth and newborn death and advocate for increased attention to, investment in, and action for, research and prevention.

As an example, one of the projects we have implemented through our Stillbirth Advocacy Working Group (SAWG) is the Global Scorecard for Ending Preventable Stillbirths. This scorecard tracks progress against global targets for stillbirth reduction and respectful care after stillbirth that were set in the Lancet’s 2016 Ending Preventable Stillbirths Series. An adapted version of this scorecard, focussed on high-income countries, has been developed by ISA’s Western Pacific Regional Office, the Centre of Research Excellence in Stillbirth in Australia.

In 2020, the global Scorecard reached global prominence when UNICEF provided the annual update and included the 2020 version (see figure) in its Every Newborn Action Plan progress report. Among other indicators, the Scorecard tracks country research on stillbirth (indicator 5.3), demonstrating that most countries do not have a dedicated research program for stillbirth prevention.

We want to support parent organizations and parent advocates to use the information in the Scorecard to advocate for increased attention to stillbirths in their own countries. One goal of this is to raise awareness among decision makers and researchers about the need to fund and implement high-quality research, including when randomised trials are not possible or appropriate (and hence might not provide evidence to contribute to a Cochrane Review).

When it comes to the oil painting analogy in our blog, this is part of what we need to make the painting as clear as it can be.

Another project led by Australia’s Centre of Research Excellence in Stillbirth is the ISA Perinatal Death Classification System. The system, which is now being piloted in the Netherlands and Australia and will be tested across eight countries, will help to harmonise data on conditions associated with stillbirth, a critical step for researchers in identifying promising areas to focus on.

The SAWG’s Parent Voices Initiative (PVI) is another effort to increase attention on stillbirths, including Advocacy Toolkits for health providers in India and parents in Kenya. The PVI aims to build awareness and capacity to talk about stillbirth and its impact on families and involve parents in addressing some of the challenges related to stillbirth, such as providing better bereavement care. The PVI’s registry of parent support organisations is the first global listing of over 400 organisations in 75 countries that provide support to parents whose babies were stillborn, and launches in 2021.
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Perinatal Death Classification System Workshop, International Stillbirth Alliance conference in Madrid, Spain (2019). Source: ISA
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