

Cutting conveniently scheduled early births

By ACSH Staff — August 3, 2012

In response to recent reports addressing the alarmingly high rates of early elective deliveries, a new study published in *Obstetrics and Gynecology* [found](#) ^[1] that hospitals implementing quality improvement programs can reverse this troubling trend.

Given that this issue has remained a concern for some time now, we [recently discussed](#) ^[2] the adverse effects for both baby and mother that may result from elective early deliveries. In some instances, a planned early induction of labor, or even a C-section is necessary for medical reasons, but all too often, many obstetricians or moms are now scheduling delivery for the sake of convenience.

The Leapfrog Group, a nonprofit organization representing healthcare employers, reports that in 2011, 14 percent of births were early elective deliveries a drop from 17 percent the previous year. Yet in an effort to come closer to Leapfrog Group's target rate of 5 percent, researchers from the Ohio Perinatal Quality Collaborative recruited 20 hospitals in Ohio and asked them to implement various strategies that would further reduce unnecessary early deliveries.

Each hospital was allowed to formulate its own approach, such as asking patients to sign a form acknowledging the risks of the procedure, or requiring that delivering physicians first obtain approval from another professional. All of the information on scheduled births which was collected between October 2008 and December 2009 was then submitted to a common database.

Of the 23,000 deliveries reported, researchers found that about 6,700 were scheduled early many due to legitimate medical reasons. Ultimately, all of the combined hospitals' approaches contributed to an impressive 60 percent decline in the number of unnecessary early deliveries. Further analysis revealed that, compared to the first four months of the study, the last four months saw 145 fewer unnecessary deliveries.

Dr. Ross was pleased by the results and is curious to know if this reduction led to improved health for the babies and mothers.

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Links

[1] <http://www.chicagotribune.com/health/sns-rt-us-medical-birthsbre8711dx-20120802,0,167845.story>

[2] http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsID.2831/news_detail.asp