



MEDIA RELEASE

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Decrease in UK stillbirth rate gives hope to Australian and New Zealand researchers

While stillbirth rates are not decreasing in Australia and New Zealand, recent research in the UK has given the Australian and New Zealand Stillbirth Alliance (ANZSA) hope that a reduction in the stillbirth rate in this setting is possible.

A recent UK report has identified the stillbirth rate in the UK has decreased significantly for the first time since 2000 – from 5.7 per 1000 births in 2002 -2004 to 5.2 per 1000 births in 2007.

International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA) Chair Vicki Flenady says 'as researchers, parents and clinicians, we welcome this news from the UK. However, the lack of improvement in the stillbirth rate for over 20 years in Australia and New Zealand is of grave concern'.

Every year in Australia approximately 2000 pregnancies of at least 20 weeks gestation result in a stillbirth – this is the equivalent to six babies per day who are not given a chance at life, or the loss of six Boeing 747s, with 400 passengers each.

In one third of these, the death occurs unexpectedly, in an apparently healthy mother and baby, and no cause of death is ever determined. The lack of quality information for stillbirths is a major barrier to further reduction in the number of these deaths.

ANZSA Chair David Ellwood says, 'a major step forward has been reaching consensus in Australia and New Zealand on a data collection for stillbirths'.

He says, 'through improved data collection we hope to get closer to understanding why these deaths occur and decrease the stillbirth rates in Australia and New Zealand'.

ANZSA and SIDS and Kids will host the 2010 International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA) and International Society for the Study and Prevention of Infant Death (ISPID) Conference in Sydney to collaborate with the international community in stillbirth reduction.

ANZSA focuses attention on reducing stillbirth through the collective knowledge and drive of researchers, clinicians and parents.

Please visit www.stillbirthalliance.org/anz for further information about ANZSA, its member organisations and activities.

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To access the United Kingdom Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH) Perinatal Mortality Surveillance Report please see:

<http://www.cemach.org.uk/getdoc/546bb256-5d61-49a0-b592-5ceea821a7e3/Perinatal-Mortality-2007.aspx>

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