

MEDIA RELEASE

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New research shows size isn't the only important risk factor for stillbirth*Mercy Perinatal study findings identify new group of at risk babies*

A new research study conducted at Mercy Hospital for Women is one of the first of its kind to identify potential links between stillbirth and babies of a 'normal size' who – despite making up half of stillbirths – aren't monitored as closely as small babies.

Underweight babies are seen to be most at risk of stillbirth, as weight has traditionally been used as the measure of how well the placenta is working to deliver oxygen and nutrients to the baby.

Mercy Hospital for Women Obstetrician and Gynaecologist Teresa MacDonald has led a study which demonstrated that babies of an appropriate weight that show a slowing of growth in late pregnancy may also be suffering placental insufficiency – potentially placing them at increased risk of stillbirth.

"The findings from our research not only show for the first time that normal sized babies with slower third-trimester growth are suffering placental insufficiency, but also allows clinicians to identify a previously unrecognised group of babies that are potentially at risk of stillbirth," Dr MacDonald said.

"Now everyone involved in antenatal care has a new clinical red flag to look out for to better identify babies who should be more closely monitored during pregnancy."

The significance of the findings, published in the journal *BMC Medicine*, highlight the importance of ongoing pregnancy-related research. Funding for this area is often reliant on community initiatives like the Mercy Health Foundation's Pram Jam fundraiser.

"Unfortunately because stillbirth is such a traumatic topic, it's easy for people to forget how prevalent an issue it is – and how desperately we need to fund ongoing care, research and education for mothers and babies around the world," said Professor Sue Walker, Director of Perinatal Medicine at Mercy Hospital for Women.

"While we're excited about the real difference these research findings could make in the way we identify and manage babies at risk of stillbirth, we know that more research needs to be done to not only reduce the stillbirth rate, but to ensure that no family need go through this traumatic experience at all," she said.

In support of such research, Pram Jam is a community walkathon which encourages participants to push their pram, walk, or run any distance from Monday 20 November to Sunday 26 November 2017, asking friends, family and colleagues to sponsor them online.

Mercy Health Foundation's Pram Jam is raising funds for Mercy Perinatal, an international centre of clinical, educational, and research excellence, based at Mercy Hospital for Women.

To find out more, to donate or to register and start raising funds today, visit pramjam.org.au

Ends

For more information and interview opportunities, please contact Porter Novelli:

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PramJam



About Pram Jam

Mercy Health Foundation is seeking support from new mums and their friends and family to push for Pram Jam, an Australia-wide campaign that raises awareness and funds for stillbirth and complications from babies being born prematurely.

By simply pushing their pram, walking or running for any distance from Monday 20 November to Sunday 26 November 2017, and asking friends, family and colleagues to sponsor them online, participants will make an important difference to the health and wellbeing of Australian mums and bubs.

All proceeds from Pram Jam will go towards Mercy Perinatal, to support ongoing care, research, education and treatments to advance the health and wellbeing of mums and bubs across the country.

About Mercy Health Foundation

The Mercy Health Foundation has supported Mercy Health by raising funds to improve the care of those in need through research, education, health and wellbeing programs since 2006.

Mercy Health provides a range of health care services across Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, including acute and subacute hospital care, aged care and specialist women's and babies' health facilities.