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Multiple Births Canada /

Naissance multiples

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*Supporting
Multiple
Births
Together*

Diagnosing Multiple Pregnancies

Early ultrasounds for all multiple pregnancies can save lives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2015

OTTAWA, ONTARIO – Multiple Births Canada (MBC) announces the theme for National Multiple Births Awareness Day 2015 (May 28th) is: ***Twin-Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS) – Early diagnosis can save lives.***

Education is the key to diagnosing and treating TTTS, and this begins with health professionals and families knowing and understanding the need for early ultrasounds during pregnancy. TTTS occurs in 10-15% of identical monochorionic [MC] twin pregnancies, all of whom share a placenta, putting the lives of one or both twins at risk before they are born. TTTS can also occur in triplets and higher order multiples, if two or more of the fetuses originate from a single embryo and thus are monochorionic. In Canada, there are approximately 250 cases of TTTS each year.

TTTS can appear at any time during pregnancy, but most cases occur between 16-26 weeks gestation. Recent medical advancements to treat TTTS can save lives, however people must be aware that there is a need for early diagnosis and immediate referral. In-utero treatment by fetoscopic selective laser ablation of the 'culprit' shared placental vessels is lifesaving, and can completely reverse TTTS in many cases. In Canada, there are fetal therapy centres in Toronto (Mount Sinai hospital); Montreal (Ste. Justine and McGill hospitals); and Vancouver (BC Women's hospital).

To draw attention to the risk of TTTS, and raise funds to produce support materials for these families, this year MBC affiliates and multiple-birth groups across Canada are adding a new element to their National Multiple Births Awareness Day celebrations. Individuals and groups will be "**Strolling to Save Lives.**" Funds raised from these community events will support MBC's national Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) project to produce and distribute MBC educational and outreach resources to NICUs across Canada.

MBC is sharing a Fact Sheet on TTTS, personal stories from families experiencing TTTS and other resources about National Multiple Births Awareness Day on their [website](#).

TTTS MEDICAL EXPLANATION:

TTTS is usually identified on ultrasound between 14-30 weeks of pregnancy. At 11-14 weeks, ultrasound can reliably indicate if fetuses share a single placenta (i.e. are monochorionic [MC]), and ALL MC twins should be monitored by ultrasound every 2 weeks throughout pregnancy. All MC twins share blood vessels in their placenta, and if the exchange of blood between the twins is unbalanced, one twin (the recipient) gets more blood than its sibling and produces too much urine, causing an increase in amniotic fluid, while the other twin (the donor) produces too little urine and can become "stuck" because of too little amniotic fluid.

MBC QUOTE:

"In Canada, we have excellent healthcare for our most vulnerable babies, however we currently lack ongoing peer support programs to assist the families of babies living in and out of neonatal intensive care units. MBC understands the isolation experienced by multiple-birth families in NICU, and addresses this need by offering a peer-to-peer support network." *Carolyn Leighton-Hilborn, Chair, Preterm Birth Support Network, MBC.*

PROFESSIONAL AND FAMILY QUOTES:

- In 1998, Dr. Greg Ryan, of Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, pioneered the treatment for TTTS in Canada and has now treated over 500 cases of TTTS. With this treatment, the survival of affected babies went from 10% to approximately 80%. "Unfortunately, many cases of TTTS still go undiagnosed each year. All identical twin pregnancies should be followed with ultrasounds every 2 weeks from about 16 weeks gestation onwards," says Dr. Ryan.
- Neil and Ginger Blythin know the success of early diagnosis. At 23 weeks, they put their twins' lives in Dr. Ryan's hands. "When it comes to Dr. Ryan and the Fetal Medicine Unit team at Mount Sinai, it's hard to express how lucky we feel; they made miracles happen," says Ginger.

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