CORDIS Express: Research to improve infant health

This edition of CORDIS Express takes a look at the research projects across the EU that are exploring ways to improve treatment and increase knowledge on the health of pregnant women and their babies.

Over 5 million women deliver babies in European countries every year. Each one of these newborns deserves the best start in life but sadly child mortality and illness in the perinatal period – pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum – remains a major concern in Europe.

According to EURO-PERISTAT, which monitors and evaluates maternal and child health in the perinatal period, in 2010, infant mortality rates ranged from 2.3 per 1000 live births in Iceland and Finland to 5.5 in Malta, 5.7 in Latvia, and 9.8 in Romania.

Thankfully, developments in research and care are making an impact. EURO-PERISTAT has reported a fall in fetal, neonatal, and infant mortality fell across-the-board in Europe between 2004 and 2010. Improved equipment and knowledge have helped thousands of preterm babies to survive their first hours and days.

Other babies are born with conditions that demand special care. According to EURO-PERISTAT, the decade through 2010 saw shallow declines in the prevalence of non-chromosomal anomalies including neural tube defects and congenital heart defects but increases in some congenital anomalies including Down syndrome and Gastroschisis.

Newborns are also at risk of an array of complications in their first hours and days of their lives. About one in every ten newborn babies needs special care for premature birth or other complications and the treatment practices may involve painful or stressful procedures.

This edition of CORDIS Express explores some of the EU-funded research projects that are contributing to improved treatment for pregnant women and babies.

- IMPROVED babies help tackle pre-eclampsia
- New treatments for babies born with low blood pressure
- Clean environment link to diabetes offers vaccine hope
- Identifying the genes for pre-eclampsia
- European trial to improve healthcare of preterm babies

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