Maternal obesity in the UK: Findings from a national project

In 2008, the Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH) initiated a 3-year UK-wide Obesity in Pregnancy project. The project was developed following five specific objectives:

- To develop standards of care for women with obesity in pregnancy
- To determine the prevalence of women with a BMI ≥35 during pregnancy in the UK.
- To assess how maternity services are organised for the care of women with obesity in pregnancy
- To provide UK national rates of pregnancy-related outcomes among women with a BMI ≥35
- To assess the degree to which clinical standards of care for women with obesity in pregnancy are being met

Obesity during pregnancy has serious implications both for the mother as well as for the foetus. Consequently, this project was designed “to investigate the scale of the problem and to assess the maternity services and care available to women with obesity.” At the conclusion of the project, a set of recommendations produced for healthcare providers, commissioners and policymakers was formulated. Below are the focused areas outlined in each of the 11 recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: Pre-pregnancy counselling
- Recommendation 2: Folic acid supplementation
- Recommendation 3: Antenatal care
- Recommendation 4: Measuring height, weight and calculating body mass index
- Recommendation 5: Information giving during pregnancy
- Recommendation 6: Surveillance and screening
- Recommendation 7: Anaesthesia in pregnancy and labour
- Recommendation 8: Thromboembolism and thromboprophylaxis
- Recommendation 9: Place and mode of birth
- Recommendation 10: Service organisation
- Recommendation 11: Areas for further research