



Title	Psychological Aspects, Women's Views, and Expectations Regarding Ultrasound During Pregnancy – A Health Technology Assessment
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Reference	Medicinsk Teknologivurdering – puljeprojekter 2006; 6(13). ISBN 87-7676-421-4 (online). www.sst.dk/publ/Publ2006/CEMTV/Ultralyd/ultrascan.pdf

Aim

To explore 'patient issues', ie, psychological aspects, attitudes, and expectations regarding ultrasound in a low-risk population of pregnant women undergoing screening for fetal abnormalities at different times during pregnancy.

Conclusions and results

Ultrasound in pregnancy is popular among pregnant women. Ninety percent of women wanted ultrasound offered as a nuchal translucency (NT) scan or abnormality scan, while only 10% might accept an offer of invasive testing.

About 40% might accept an invasive test if the risk assessment on Down syndrome were 1:400. If Down syndrome were diagnosed, about 48% might choose abortion. A woman's nationality, age, educational level, and ultrasound in a previous pregnancy were predictive of attitudes toward these matters.

Routine ultrasound (NT or abnormality scan) resulted in an immediate but transient decrease in anxiety level. Anxiety level seemed to be associated with the number of scans. Analyses revealed an association between heightened anxiety in pregnancy at baseline and several potential predictive factors, eg, ethnicity, age, educational level, reproductive history, and ultrasound scan findings in a previous pregnancy.

Methods

A prospective randomized multicenter study on ultrasound screening for fetal abnormalities was used, and women's attitudes and expectations toward this matter were identified by questionnaires (2500 consecutively enrolled, low-risk pregnant women completed postal questionnaires at gestational weeks 8, 22, and 35, and 12 weeks after delivery). Results were associated with clinical and sociodemographic factors.

Further research/reviews required

Identifying subgroups for heightened anxiety may contribute significantly toward anxiety reduction if adequate antenatal counseling, advice, and care can be provided for these particularly vulnerable subgroups of pregnant women. In addition, studies on the association between heightened anxiety in pregnancy and predictive factors are required.

Future research might focus on women's knowledge about ultrasound screening for fetal abnormalities and on attitudes and expectations of health professionals toward some of the qualitative matters to compare with present results.