

***Guideline Provides Maternity Care Providers with New Tools for
Prenatal Screening and Testing***

Ottawa - September 1, 2017 - The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) and the Canadian College of Medical Geneticists (CCMG) have released a new clinical guideline that recommends all pregnant women in Canada—regardless of age—be offered the option of a first trimester ultrasound and a prenatal screening test for the most common fetal aneuploidies (e.g. Down syndrome) and major congenital anomalies.

The landscape of prenatal screening and diagnosis has changed considerably in the last decade with the rapid development of new technologies, particularly the introduction of non-invasive prenatal testing or NIPT (using circulating DNA in maternal blood) and chromosomal microarray analysis of amniotic fluid.

The [Update on Prenatal Screening for Fetal Aneuploidy, Fetal Anomalies, and Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes](#) provides guidance to maternity care providers on the impact they may have on prenatal counselling, screening and diagnosis. It replaces three existing guidelines and updates two others to become the most comprehensive document in Canada on the issue to date.

“Patients who opt for testing no longer have to choose invasive procedures like amniocentesis as a first line test and can opt for lower risk options first to detect structural abnormalities earlier in their pregnancy,” says Dr. Blake, CEO SOGC. “Earlier detection can also be beneficial in determining birth dates or whether the mother is carrying twins. But these new tools also increase the need for earlier provider-patient counselling about the risks, benefits and alternatives in testing—including the right to no testing prior to any screening, and the risk of false positives.”

The guideline supports various options including multiple marker screening which uses a combination of factors including maternal history, maternal age, ultrasound and two or more biochemical tests to produce a single result for risk of Down syndrome, trisomy 18, and open neural tube defects. The guideline also recommends if a fetal structural abnormality is identified, regardless of previous screening test results, genetic counselling and invasive fetal diagnostic testing should be offered. In case of a positive test using circulating DNA, invasive testing is also warranted before any irreversible decision is taken.

“We believe women have the right to the most accurate and up-to-date information about the health of their unborn children. This guideline is a valuable resource for maternity care providers and will help them to provide informed counselling to their patients,” says Dr. Blake.

For more information or to arrange a media interview, please contact:

Anne Trueman, Director of Communications

Email: atrueman@sogc.com

Telephone: 613-730-4192, ext. 228

About the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada

The SOGC is one of Canada's oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society's mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information visit www.sogc.org.