Involving Fathers in Ante-natal Screening for Sickle Cell Disorders: Improving Informed Decision Making

Recommendations from the Project for GPs

- Ensure that sickle cell is brought up in general consultations if a genetic possibility and probe family histories if needed. Fathers and mothers sometimes feel it is too late to offer testing when pregnant. They would like to be offered a test sooner.

- Irrespective of apparent ethnicity consider offering a screening test for sickle cell/thalassaemia as part of the package offered when first registering at a GP surgery.

- Respond positively to requests from any patients for a sickle cell screening test. Explain difference between sickle cell disorder and ‘carrier’ status.

- Testing should be an individual’s choice but discuss pros and cons. Ensure you have leaflets and information available. At present, fathers do not feel they are making informed choices.

- If tests have taken place elsewhere, probe and suggest repeat tests if necessary.

- Be ready to explain carrier status, where to go for counselling and implications for pregnancy. Understand how some couples might find screening stigmatising.

A copy of the final report and resources can be found at:

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