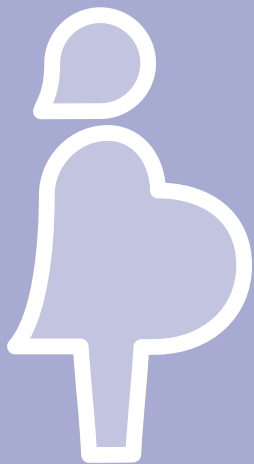


WHO recommendations

Policy of interventionist versus expectant management of severe pre-eclampsia before term



World Health
Organization

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**Policy of interventionist versus
expectant management of severe
pre-eclampsia before term**

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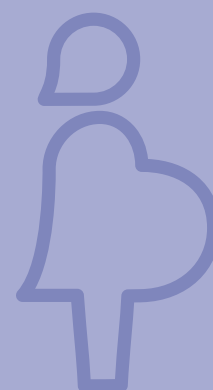
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Acronyms and abbreviations

BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
CI	Confidence interval
CS	Caesarean section
DOI	Declaration of Interest
FIGO	International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics
FWC	Family, Women's and Children's Health (a WHO cluster)
GDG	Guideline Development Group
GRC	Guideline Review Committee
GRADE	Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluation
GREAT	Guideline development, Research priorities, Evidence synthesis, Applicability of evidence, Transfer of knowledge (a WHO project)
GSG	Executive Guideline Steering Group
HELLP	Haemolysis, elevated liver enzymes, low platelet
ICM	International Confederation of Midwives
IOL	Induction of labour
LMIC	Low and middle-income country
MCA	[WHO Department of] Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health
MPA	Maternal and Perinatal Health and Preventing Unsafe Abortion (a team in WHO's Department of Reproductive Health and Research)
MPH	Maternal and perinatal health
NICU	Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
NNT	Number needed to treat
PICO	Population (P), intervention (I), comparison (C), outcome (O)
RHR	[WHO Department of] Reproductive Health and Research
RR	Relative risk
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization



Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Acronyms and abbreviations	iv
Executive Summary	1
1. Background	3
2. Methods	5
3. Recommendations and supporting evidence	10
4. Dissemination and implementation of the recommendations	10
5. Research implications	11
6. Applicability issues	12
7. Updating the recommendations	12
References	13
Annex 1. External experts and WHO staff involved in the preparation of the guideline	14
Annex 2. Priority outcomes for decision-making	18
Annex 3. Summary and management of declared interests from GDG members	19
Annex 4. Evidence-to-decision framework	21
Annex 5. GRADE Tables	29

Executive Summary

Introduction

Hypertensive disorders of pregnancy are an important cause of severe morbidity, long-term disability and death among both pregnant women and their babies, and account for approximately 14% of all maternal deaths worldwide. Improving care for women around the time of childbirth is a necessary step towards achievement of the health targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Efforts to prevent and reduce morbidity and mortality during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period could also help address the profound inequities in maternal and perinatal health globally. To achieve these aims, healthcare providers, health managers, policymakers and other stakeholders need up-to-date and evidence-based recommendations to inform clinical policies and practices.

In 2017, the Executive Guideline Steering Group (GSG) on the World Health Organization's (WHO) maternal and perinatal health recommendations prioritized the updating of the existing three WHO recommendations on the management of severe pre-eclampsia before term in response to important new evidence on these questions. These recommendations are a revalidation of the previous recommendations issued in 2011 in the *WHO recommendations on prevention and treatment of pre-eclampsia and eclampsia*.

Target audience

The primary audience of these recommendations includes health professionals who are responsible for developing national and local health protocols (particularly those related to hypertensive disorders of pregnancy) and those directly providing care to pregnant women and their newborns, including midwives, nurses, general medical practitioners, obstetricians, managers of maternal and child health programmes, and relevant staff in ministries of health, in all settings.

Guideline development methods

The updating of these recommendations was guided by standardized operating procedures in accordance with the process described in the *WHO handbook for guideline development*. The recommendations were initially developed using this process, namely:

- (i) identification of the priority question and critical outcomes;
- (ii) retrieval of evidence;
- (iii) assessment and synthesis of evidence;
- (iv) formulation of the recommendation; and
- (v) planning for the dissemination, implementation, impact evaluation and updating of the recommendations.

The scientific evidence supporting these recommendations was synthesized using the Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluation (GRADE) approach. The systematic review was used to prepare evidence profiles for the prioritized question. WHO convened an online meeting on 2 May 2018 where an international group of experts – the Guideline Development Group (GDG) – reviewed and approved these recommendations.

The recommendations

The GDG reviewed the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects and the overall certainty of supporting evidence, values and preferences of stakeholders, resource requirements and cost-effectiveness, acceptability, feasibility and equity. The GDG revalidated the WHO recommendations published in 2011 with minor revisions to the remarks and implementation considerations.

To ensure that the recommendations are correctly understood and applied in practice, guideline users should refer to the remarks, as well as to the evidence summary, if there is any doubt as to the basis for the recommendations and how best to implement them.

Table 1: WHO recommendations: policy of interventionist versus expectant management of severe pre-eclampsia before term.

<p>Recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Induction of labour is recommended for women with severe pre-eclampsia at a gestational age when the fetus is not viable or unlikely to achieve viability within one or two weeks. (<i>strong recommendation, very low certainty evidence</i>)2. In women with severe pre-eclampsia, a viable fetus and before 34 weeks of gestation, a policy of expectant management is recommended, provided that uncontrolled maternal hypertension, increasing maternal organ dysfunction or fetal distress are absent and can be monitored. (<i>conditional recommendation, very low certainty evidence</i>)3. In women with severe pre-eclampsia, a viable fetus and between 34 and 36 (plus 6 days) weeks of gestation, a policy of expectant management may be recommended, provided that uncontrolled maternal hypertension, increasing maternal organ dysfunction or fetal distress are absent and can be monitored. (<i>conditional recommendation, very low certainty evidence</i>)
<p>Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A policy of expectant management usually includes intra-hospital care with steroids for fetal lung maturation, magnesium sulfate (as necessary), antihypertensive drugs (as necessary), and close maternal and fetal monitoring to identify indications for delivery (e.g. uncontrolled hypertension, deterioration in the condition of the mother and the fetus, including organ dysfunction and fetal distress). As part of expectant management, in-utero transfer to a tertiary-level centre with neonatal intensive care capacity should be considered. The decision on the route of delivery should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account, among other factors, gestational age, fetal and cervical status and urgency.• The guideline development group considered that the gestational age threshold for using expectant management in very preterm fetuses depends on the fetal viability status and on the anticipated prolongation of gestation with expectant management. The guideline development group acknowledged that the gestational age threshold of fetal viability should be locally agreed. In establishing this threshold, the local context, the availability of resources, and the local newborn survival rates by gestational age should be considered. The average gain in terms of prolongation of gestation with expectant management ranges from 1 week to 2 weeks. Hence, fetuses at a gestational age 1–2

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