



Media Release

17 April 2010

Transfusion saves unborn baby

Doctors at the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne have saved a baby by giving it a life-saving blood transfusion, months before it was born.

Obstetrician Dr Ricardo Palma-Dias and a specialist team at the Women's saved the unborn baby by giving it a transfusion, in utero, at 21 weeks gestation.

Guided by ultrasound, Dr Palma-Dias inserted a needle into the mother's abdomen and transfused 25 ml of blood straight into the baby's umbilical cord, which went straight into its blood stream.

Another 15ml was put into the baby's abdomen to be slowly released over the following weeks.

The procedure was completed in October and the pregnancy continued normally. The baby, a girl named Zahlee, was born in February with no ill effects.

The medical emergency began when the baby's mother, Rachel Fellowes of Portland in regional Victoria, visited her obstetrician for her 20 week examination.

A scan revealed that the baby was very ill, and the doctor immediately referred Ms Fellowes to the Women's.

There Dr Palma-Dias confirmed the unborn baby was suffering from the parvovirus. The common virus was potentially fatal because it caused severe anaemia in the baby as it destroyed bone marrow which produces red blood cells.

"The baby's haemoglobin count was 3.4 when it should have been above 11," Dr Palma-Dias explained.

"Without the transfusion, the baby would have died." After the procedure, the baby's haemoglobin count rose to 12.1, and nine days after the procedure there were no signs of problems.

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For more information contact:

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