**Letter in response to ‘Evaluation of a simple risk score to predict preterm pre‐eclampsia using maternal characteristics: a prospective cohort study’**

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We were interested to read Sovio and Smith’s findings that a simple risk score was clinically useful in predicting the risk of preterm pre‐eclampsia. 1 However, as GPs we are also interested in what happens to women with preeclampsia after delivery, particularly when they return to the care of their GPs. These women have four times the long-term risk of hypertension and double the risk of heart attack or stroke of women with a normotensive pregnancy 1. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommends using the 6-8 week postnatal check in primary care as a chance to initiate lifestyle changes2 to reduce cardiovascular risk. However it is underutilised for this purpose ,3

We are planning a trial of promoting fast walking in postnatal women who have had hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. In 2018-19 we did a pilot study in 15 postpartum women in primary care to assess if physical activity had been promoted to them at their postnatal check. We also explored their acceptance of using the Active 10 smartphone application to facilitate this process. Active 10 was created by Public Health England to promote and track brisk walking at 3-4mph starting with a target of 10 minutes a day. 4

Data from 15 women were gathered aged 29-40 of mixed ethnicities from 8-24 weeks postpartum. Only two out of the fifteen women reported receiving advice regarding physical activity during their 6-8 week check. However, all but one of the women were doing some form of exercise, largely in the form of walking (although not brisk walking). Four of the women were already using an application to track their exercise but one woman could not as she did not own a smartphone. All the women were keen to receive advice about brisk walking, and nine agreed to download the Active 10 app. At the 2-week review, seven had downloaded the application and some reported their surprise at how little brisk walking they actually did. By the 6-week mark, five women continued to use the Active 10 app. The women who tried brisk walking reported positive feedback and continued to incorporate this into their daily routine whether they tracked it or not.

Most of these women were not given any form of advice regarding physical activity during their postnatal check. Given the broad health benefits of exercising in the postnatal period, this has important implications for future cardiovascular health outcomes. Contributory barriers in primary care may include GPs’ time constraints whilst also addressing other important postnatal issues, and a lack of confidence in delivering tailored physical activity advice. Like Sovio and Smith we aim to improve management of women with preeclampsia. 1 Using Active 10 to encourage brisk walking when pushing a buggy may be a feasible idea to keep active in the postnatal period.

References

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 4. Brannan MGT, Foster CE, Timpson CM, et al. Active 10 - A new approach to increase physical activity in inactive people in England. Prog Cardiovasc Dis **2019 Mar**; 62(2):135-9.