

Maternal Request: A Minor but Important Contributor to the Rising Rates of Caesarean Section: A Retrospective Observational Study

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Abstract : Background: Over recent decades the number of caesarean sections performed in the UK has continued to rise. The cause of the rising caesarean rate (CSR) is not well understood. However, one of the most heavily cited reasons is an increase in maternal request for caesarean section. Maternal request for caesarean section (CDMR) refers to a caesarean section performed on maternal request with no medical indication. The true rate of caesarean delivery on maternal request in the UK and its contribution to the caesarean section rate is not known. Methods: To elucidate current understanding of the cause of the rising caesarean section rate and the role of CDMR we conducted a systematic review of the literature. To determine the role of CDMR in the CSR at the PRH we conducted a retrospective observational study of the caesarean section rates and CDMR from 2009-2015. Results: We demonstrated a negative correlation between rates of elective sections and CDMR over the study period (-0.123). On average, there were more elective sections performed after 2011 (15.10% of all deliveries) than before 2011 (12.41% of all deliveries); this difference was statistically significant ($p = < 0.001$). There were more cases of CDMR after 2011 (1.39% of all deliveries) than before 2011 (0.85% of all deliveries). The difference in average rates of CDMR before and after 2011 was statistically significant ($p \leq 0.001$). Conclusions: CDMR is only a minor contributor to the CSR at the PRH. However, it remains an important factor because it represents a target for the reduction of the CSR that is more manageable than other, more complex and ubiquitous causes of the rising CSR.

Keywords : cesarean section, maternal request for cesarean section, obstetrics, pre-natal health

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