

## NEWS RELEASE



# International Vasa Previa Foundation

*It only takes a moment to diagnose life...*

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### **International Vasa Previa Foundation Applauds the Sunday Times in the U.K. for Unleashing Articles Which Will Significantly Help in the Prevention of Newborn Baby Deaths Due To a Life-Threatening Condition, Vasa Previa**

*After The Sunday Times called attention to crucial information, facts and testimonial from parents whose babies had died due to this condition, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in the U.K. has decided to change the guidelines on diagnosing vasa previa; pregnant women will now be screened during routine ultrasound at 20 weeks, subsequently preventing babies from dying.*

*The IVPF has been raising awareness of these preventable deaths in the U.S. and worldwide for 6 years. 54,000 lives could be saved worldwide and 1,600 in the U.S. alone.*

**Boca Raton, FL** – February 27, 2007, The International Vasa Previa Foundation (IVPF), created in 2001 to create awareness about a life-threatening condition during pregnancy called vasa previa, applauds The Sunday Times, one of the top five newspapers in the U.K., after they published a series of articles this month which motivated the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [RCOG] in the UK to change its guidelines on the condition and have high risk pregnant women screened during ultrasound at 20 weeks, preventing babies from dying of this fatal condition.

The Sunday Times covered a heartbreaking story about a husband and wife, one of them a lawyer expert in clinical negligence, whose son died 13 days after birth in 2005 as a result of vasa previa. The couple formed an action group to campaign for all mothers to be scanned for the condition, as they affirmed that every year at least 350 babies are dying needlessly in that country because doctors and hospitals do not carry out the necessary scan for the condition to avoid the costs of treatment for affected mothers. One week after the article appeared in The Sunday Times, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has agreed to change its guidelines to make a scan of the condition during the 20 week routine ultrasound to pregnant women at risk (those diagnosed with a low lying placenta or placenta previa).

The initial article has been followed up with additional newspaper articles, BBC radio interviews and prime time television coverage in the U.K.

**In the United States, scanning for vasa previa is not part of the standard of care, although a recently published Clinical Expert series article by Drs. Yinka Oyelese and John Smolian in the Green Journal, the most important journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology clearly states, “We think there is no other condition in which prenatal diagnosis and appropriate prenatal management makes such a dramatic impact or the difference between survival and death for an otherwise healthy infant. Thus, especially because it adds little in terms of time to the routine obstetric sonogram, it is our opinion that screening for vasa previa should be routine.”**

## *-2- International Vasa Previa Foundation Applauds*

Vasa previa is a rarely diagnosed (1:2500) condition in which fetal blood vessel(s) from the placenta or umbilical cord crosses the entrance to the birth canal, beneath the baby. In pregnancies complicated by Vasa Previa, up to 95% of all infants die when there is no prenatal diagnosis. Experts say if the condition is detected prior to labor, the baby has a near 100% chance of surviving. If checking for vasa previa becomes part of the standard

of care, potentially 1,600 babies in the U.S. and 54, 000 babies worldwide could be saved every year. (Based on World Health Organization, World Health Report 2005 figures).

Vasa previa can be detected during pregnancy with use of transvaginal sonography, preferably in combination with color Doppler. When the condition is diagnosed, elective delivery by cesarean before labor begins can save the baby's life. The IVPF recommends hospitalization in the 3rd trimester, delivery by 35 weeks, and immediate blood transfusion of the infant in the event of a rupture.

"We are so pleased and excited about the positive outcome of The Sunday Times' recent articles and follow up press about vasa previa in the U.K." said Amy Gaghagen, President of the International Vasa Previa Foundation. "One of the IVPF's main objectives is to adjust the medical protocols and guidelines to prevent babies' death as much as possible. The decision of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists regarding the change of its guidelines of the condition is a major step toward understanding the importance of prenatal diagnosis to save the life of many babies. **We are hopeful that we will be able to awaken the interest of the United States media to help us prevent any more senseless infant deaths.**"

### **About IVPF**

The International Vasa Previa Foundation (IVPF), established in January 2001, consists of women and families who have been affected by pregnancies with vasa previa. Its mission is to raise awareness about vasa previa, to disseminate information on the condition, and to facilitate research aimed at further understanding of vasa previa with the aim of minimizing the perinatal mortality from the condition.

The International Vasa Previa Foundation participates in research, supports families affected by vasa previa, and attends medical conferences throughout the world in the interest of working to further awareness of vasa previa, its risk factors, testing, and management.

*The International Vasa Previa Foundation (IVPF) was established in January 2001 by parents and families affected by vasa previa to raise awareness of vasa previa and to prevent fatal outcomes. The IVPF agrees that vasa previa can, but should not be, a devastating complication of pregnancy. Despite its severity, it is commonly unrecognized by women, midwives, and obstetricians. Despite the technology existing to detect vasa previa prenatally, it is rarely diagnosed prior to the onset of labor and sometimes, fatal decisions are made during labor and delivery.*

For more information contact the International Vasa Previa Foundation at [www.IVPF.org](http://www.IVPF.org) or [info@vasaprevia.com](mailto:info@vasaprevia.com)

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