

A Sastry (ST5 General Adult Psychiatry), S Henderson (ST5 Medical Psychotherapy),  
K Morton (Consultant Psychiatrist, NHS Lanarkshire), S Gleadow-Ware (Consultant Psychiatrist, NHS Lanarkshire)



## Introduction

Eating Disorders in pregnancy and the postnatal period are important to consider as they can have detrimental effects on the woman and the developing fetus.

This can result in:

- Low birth weight
- Obstetric complications (premature labour)
- Increased body dissatisfaction and a rapid decrease in BMI postnatally. <sup>1</sup>

Eating habits can also improve during pregnancy which may mask worsening symptoms during the postnatal period. <sup>1</sup>



## Objectives

1. To determine whether guidance set out in SIGN 164, 14.1 (relating to pregnancy and Eating Disorders) is being applied in clinical practice, by gaining insight into staff **confidence and awareness** of the updated guidelines published in January 2022. <sup>1</sup>
2. To ascertain staff's interest in training opportunities with a view to improving confidence, supporting best practice and enhancing quality of care.



## Methods

A qualitative staff survey was created online to assess use and understanding of SIGN 164, 14.1 guidance<sup>1</sup> An overview of the audit was provided at team meetings and an email invitation to complete the questionnaire was circulated to Midwifery, Perinatal Mental Health, and Health Visitor teams in NHS Lanarkshire.

Information was gathered in regards to:

- Staff awareness
- Confidence
- Current practice
- Interest in further training.

Before re-audit, written report from 1<sup>st</sup> cycle with findings as well as written recommendations and learning materials was sent out and authors offered to discuss these at team meetings.

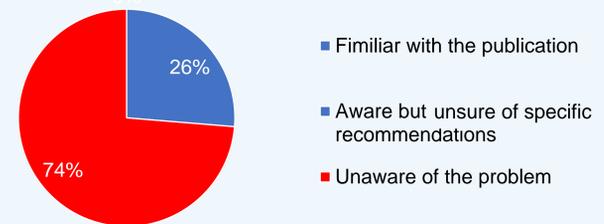


## Results

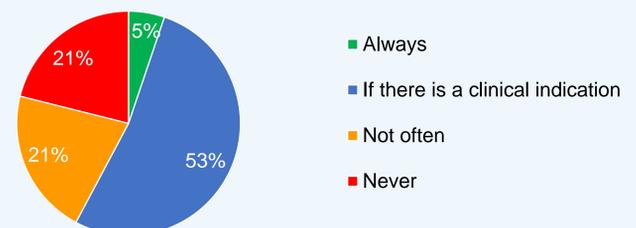
**1st cycle:** 19 completed questionnaires received. Of the participants involved, the majority indicated a lack of knowledge of the guidance, a lack of confidence in enquiring about Eating Disorders and limited awareness of the barriers patients may experience in disclosing history in regards to their Eating Disorder. 90% expressed belief they would benefit from further training in the guidance. (Graphs below from 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle results).

**2nd cycle:** No responses received despite assertive outreach attempts.

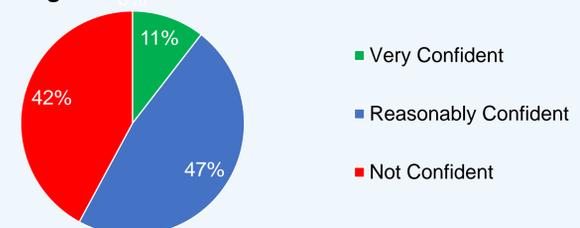
To what extent were you aware of the guidance and related update?



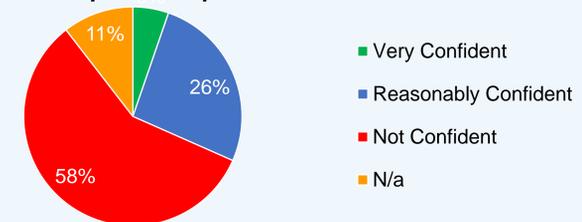
During contact with patients during pregnancy and the post-natal period do you enquire if the patient has a current or past history of eating disorder?



How confident do you feel in regards to enquiring if the patient has a current or past history of eating disorder?



If a history of eating disorder is disclosed, how confident are you in discussing with patients who are pregnant how their eating disorder symptoms may change during the antenatal and postnatal period?



## Discussion

The results indicated a lack of knowledge of the guidance, a lack of confidence in enquiring about Eating Disorders and limited awareness of the barriers patients may experience in disclosing Eating Disorders. The majority of participants expressed an interest in training in this area, suggesting an eagerness to support increased knowledge and implementation of the guidelines and improvement in quality of care. The number of responses was small in 1<sup>st</sup> cycle (19) and Nil (0) in 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle hence cannot be fully representative of the teams directly involved in patient care. It is unclear why there were no responses to 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle- perhaps staff felt they had no further information to provide/ no change to report. Moreover, there was a larger proportion of health visitors involved in the study which may underrepresent the midwifery staff who have contact with patients antenatally- a critical time of history-taking and risk assessment. Moreover Family Nurse Practitioners who also provide care for a significant proportion of pregnant and postnatal patients in high risk groups were not included in the survey.



## Conclusion

There is significant scope for improvement in awareness and use of guidance available as well as staff confidence in this area. Participants will be provided further training and information in regards to these new guidelines including being sent the recommendations, full guidelines, audit write up and learning materials.