

Title:	Fetal fibronectin test for predicting preterm labour
Agency:	Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) MDP 106 Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing GPO Box 9849 Canberra ACT 2601 <a href="http://www.msac.gov.au">http://www.msac.gov.au</a>
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### **Aim**

To evaluate the safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of fetal fibronectin testing to assess preterm labour and the circumstances under which this test should be publicly funded.

### **Results and conclusions**

#### *Safety*

Safety data relating to fetal fibronectin testing were not identified. There is considered to be minimal risk to patients because test samples are obtained during standard speculum examinations.

#### *Effectiveness*

Negative test results provide moderate diagnostic value to identify women in suspected preterm labour not at immediate risk of preterm delivery. There was insufficient evidence to support making conclusive recommendations about the diagnostic precision of fetal fibronectin testing among asymptomatic pregnant women considered to be at high risk of preterm delivery.

The value of fetal fibronectin testing in clinical decision-making in Australia remains uncertain because patient management data are limited. Treatment effectiveness was not examined among women in suspected preterm labour because it was considered unlikely that testing would identify additional patients needing treatment. Treatment effectiveness was not examined among high risk asymptomatic women because diagnostic accuracy and patient management data provided insufficient evidence for analysis.

#### *Cost-effectiveness*

The financial impact of fetal fibronectin testing for women in suspected preterm labour was estimated to cost Medicare Australia between \$1.66 million and \$3.04 million per year. However there was some uncertainty about potential savings generated as a result of providing testing for women suspected of preterm labour. There was insufficient evidence to warrant an economic analysis of testing among high risk asymptomatic women.

### **Recommendation**

MSAC determined that the test is safe but effectiveness has not been demonstrated. MSAC does not support public funding for this test at this time. The Minister for Health and Ageing endorsed this recommendation on 5 February 2007.

**Methods**

MSAC conducted a systematic review of the medical literature pertaining to fetal fibronectin testing. Citations that met predefined inclusion criteria were presented in the review of evidence.

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