



New born enters world by rare EXIT

12 April 2024



A 50 strong team of specialist medics crammed into an operation theatre recently to carry out a globally rare procedure on a newborn baby and save his life.

Little Freddie Verschueren was delivered at St George's hospital in South West London using the Ex-utero Intrapartum Treatment (EXIT) procedure which delivers babies who could potentially have serious challenges at birth.

This procedure is used when an unborn child has an obstruction in their airway which means they would be unable to breathe independently once they are removed from the placenta.

Professor Asma Khalil, consultant obstetrician at St George's, led the entire operation, which involved about 50 medics and other staff in the operating theatre.

She said: "An EXIT procedure involves a large number of healthcare professionals from various backgrounds including an obstetrician, fetal medicine specialist, an anaesthetist, a paediatric anaesthetist, a paediatric ENT surgeon, midwives and the neonatal team, as well as other theatre staff."

In little Freddie's case there was a cyst on his tongue that could potentially block his airways it was detected in a scan during his mum's second trimester. The team made an incision in mum Anna's tummy and delivered Freddie's head and shoulders first, leaving him attached to the placenta and able to breathe.

They established an airway so he could breathe independently before delivering the rest of him. Freddie weighed 6lbs 8oz (3.1kg) at birth and was able to go home with his parents Anna and Peter Verschueren a healthy baby.

Anna said: "We've been incredibly impressed with the service we have had at St George's, at every step it has been outstanding care. When we found out we needed to have the procedure we felt in such safe hands with the experts at St George's. We never doubted their skill and advice."

Professor Khalil added: "I am very grateful to the efforts by every member of our large team who ensured that we delivered the best care to Anna and Freddie. Saving babies' lives and caring for the parents during challenging times is the most rewarding aspect of my job."

An EXIT procedure is extremely rare. However, despite its global rarity this is the second time it has been carried out in St George's this year.

Dr Richard Jennings, Group Chief Medical Officer for St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group, said: "St George's is one of the few hospitals in the country that carries out this rare procedure and saves the lives of many babies. I am pleased to hear that Freddie is doing well thanks to our dedicated and skilled teams and everyone at St George's wishes him and his family all the best for the future."