

## **Maternity patient not given appropriate advice**

A patient complained about the antenatal care and treatment she received while at the maternity unit of the Ulster Hospital.

Her complaint focused on the availability of amniocentesis testing during her pregnancy and the subsequent diagnosis of her baby with a life-limiting genetic disorder after birth. She complained that chromosomal conditions and otherwise isolated cleft issues, and the risks around amniocentesis, were not fully discussed with her. She also said that the abnormalities visible after birth should have been identified during ultrasound scanning.

As there were no stored images for analysis, the Ombudsman was unable to conclude that there were fetal abnormalities capable of being observed on ultrasound. This element of the complaint was not upheld.

In relation to the other part of the complaint, the Ombudsman's investigation found that the medical notes lacked evidence of a clear record of any discussion of the risks associated with amniocentesis. There were also no notes of a discussion of abnormalities associated with cleft lip. The doctor stated that that it is more likely than not that this took place, but accepted that his note taking was lacking.

The Ombudsman concluded on the balance of probabilities that a request for amniocentesis was made by the complainant, but that appropriate advice and discussion on issues associated with cleft lip was not given and recorded during the consultation. This amounted to a failure in care and treatment.

The Trust apologised for its failures in this case and acknowledged the distress caused to the patient as a result.