

Q&As: Maternal morbidity review toolkit

What is the maternal morbidity review toolkit?

The maternal morbidity review toolkit provides maternity services with clear, easy-to-use, evidence-based guidance and resources for implementing a consistent process for review of cases of significant maternal morbidity (when a pregnant or recently pregnant woman is very ill).

Who is the toolkit for?

The toolkit was primarily developed for district health boards (DHBs) but is also suitable for use by private maternity services.

What is maternal morbidity?

Severe acute maternal morbidity (also known as maternal 'near miss') is when a pregnant or recently pregnant woman is very ill and could have died.

Maternal morbidity rates are used alongside maternal mortality as a measure of the responsiveness and quality of maternity care.

While maternal morbidity events are rare, the impact on the woman and her whānau, and on the clinicians who provided her care, are often profound.

What is maternal morbidity review?

Maternal morbidity reviews are quality improvement initiatives that allow teams to identify ways to improve systems and processes to reduce maternal morbidity. Through reviews, maternity teams learn, share and understand issues to minimise future cases of maternal morbidity.

Why was the toolkit developed?

The toolkit was developed in response to the identified need from the maternity sector for a process that provides consistency, transparency and structure.

It should be integrated into the wider organisational requirements and statutory responsibility for adverse event reporting.

The toolkit will complement and inform the wider quality and safety environment of DHBs and private maternity services.

Several DHBs volunteered to trial the toolkit in 2017 and it has been modified in response to feedback.

What is in the toolkit?

The toolkit includes:

- a foundational document
- a terms of reference template
- an example of a trigger list
- a maternal morbidity review template, which includes:
 - case summary template
 - maternal morbidity review tool
 - example of an action template
- the maternal morbidity review checklist
- the Health Equity Assessment Tool.¹

Some of the resources have been adapted from existing DHB resources and modified, with permission.

Who developed the toolkit?

The toolkit was developed by the Maternal Morbidity Working Group (MMWG), part of the Health Quality & Safety Commission's Perinatal and Maternal Mortality Review Committee. The MMWG reviews and reports on maternal morbidity and develops quality improvement initiatives to reduce maternal morbidity and help mothers stay safe and healthy.

The MMWG also provides clinical governance for maternal morbidity review at a national level and works with maternity services to improve local maternal morbidity reviews.

Will the toolkit be updated in the future?

The toolkit will be reviewed in November 2021 and may be updated thereafter.

The MMWG would like to acknowledge the women and their whānau whose cases were reviewed during the testing of the toolkit.

¹ HEAT aims to promote equity in health in New Zealand. It comprises 10 questions for assessing policy, programme or service interventions for the current or future impact on health inequities. HEAT is a flexible tool that can be used in its entirety or, alternatively, selected questions can be asked for specific purposes. See: www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/health-equity-assessment-tool-guide.pdf.