

Business as usual during the COVID-19 pandemic? State-wide trends in maternity care consultations and obstetric ultrasounds during lockdown in VIC and NSW.

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Introduction

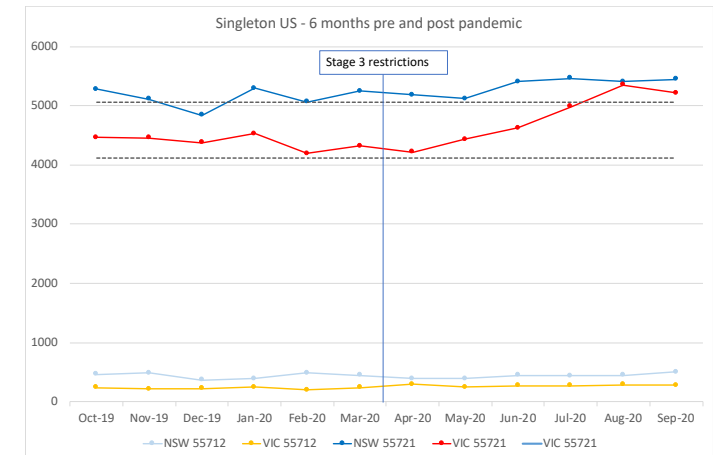
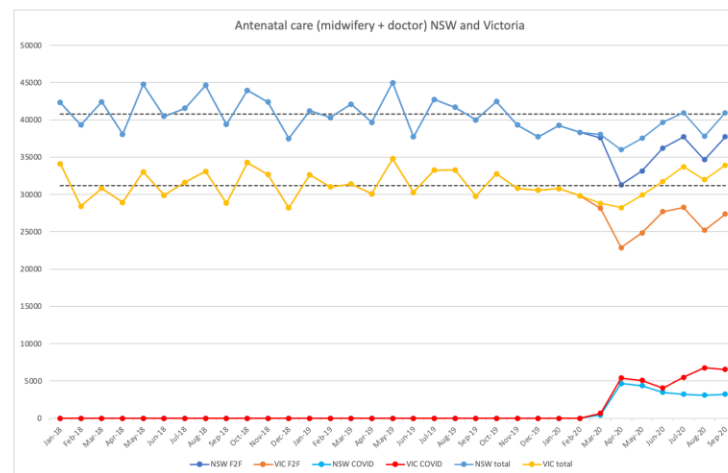
The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a range of unprecedented changes to the delivery of maternity care across Australia, including RANZCOG-endorsed measures to reduce antenatal visits, and implement telehealth. This study aims to analyse trends in maternity care consultations and the uptake of telehealth in VIC and NSW since the first COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were announced in late March 2020.

Methods

Episodes of outpatient maternity care consultations and obstetric ultrasound from January 2018 to September 2020 were obtained using Australian Government Medicare Statistics data from NSW and VIC. Run charts using pre-pandemic median from January 2018 were generated. A significant trend was defined as five consecutive months of numbers all going up or down.¹ Proportions of telehealth consultations were compared between VIC and NSW using the chi-square test for proportions.

Results

- There was no significant downward trend in monthly total antenatal and postnatal attendances following the first pandemic restrictions from March 28.
- From March to September 2020, a higher proportion of antenatal and postnatal care was delivered via telehealth/telephone in Victoria compared to New South Wales (19.4% vs 9.4% respectively, $p < 0.0001$).
- From March 2020 in Victoria, there was a significant trend towards increased ultrasounds for singleton pregnancies after 22 weeks (>5 data points above the pre-pandemic median).



Discussion

Widespread uptake of COVID-19 telehealth and telephone visits has been a major contributor to maintaining maternity consultations during Victorian pandemic restrictions. Further research is required to understand the increase in ultrasound billings during lockdown.

Reference

1. Perla RJ, *The run chart*, *BMJ Quality & Safety* 2011

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