



Avoiding twin tragedy

Finding out you are expecting twins can sometimes prove a shock.

However, rare health problems which affect identical multiples can deal a devastating double blow for parents. That's why the Aldershot-based Twins and Multiple Births Association (Tamba) has just launched an appeal to fund research into twin-to-twin transfusion pregnancies (TTTS).

This devastating condition strikes when blood passes from one twin to the other in the womb, affecting 10 to 15 per cent of identical twins who share a placenta. One mum who has experience of the condition is Carol Flack of Guildford.

After nearly six years ('on and off') of trying for a baby, Carol found out she was expecting in November 2011. A few weeks later, she discovered she was pregnant with identical twins.

Carol's scans, which included frequent checks for TTTS went well until 22 weeks, when a scan detected the condition and she was referred to a London hospital which specialised in TTTS treatment. She and her husband were given two options; do nothing or surgery. Leaving the twins would mean certain death for both babies, laser surgery meant a one-in-three chance of both surviving, a one-in-three chance of one baby surviving and one-in-three chance of neither making it.

"It all happened so quickly," says Carol, "that we didn't have time to think about it." They chose the laser surgery option and were booked in for an operation at 8am the next morning.

Much to her relief, Carol could feel kicking on both sides of her abdomen during this time. The scan revealed two heartbeats and follow-up scans over the next three weeks showed both babies were doing well. There were some later complications with one of the twins not

growing properly and at 32 weeks Carol gave birth by C-section. Hazel was born a tiny 2lb 10oz (1.21kg); Alice weighed 3lb 15oz (1.81kg).

There have been some health niggles, however, Carol says she feels blessed to have her girls happy and thriving. "Lucky is one of those weird words," says Carol, "and not all parents are as lucky as we have been. We have two happy little survivors on our hands, jumping around. Alice and Hazel are just starting to be friends with each other, even though their characters are chalk and cheese! "Life with twins is tough at times, but I love them to bits and we cannot imagine our world without them."

Tamba's appeal will raise funds for a registry, which will record all TTTS pregnancies and the treatments which will allow medical professionals to compare which TTTS treatments are most effective with the hope of achieving better outcomes for TTTS babies in the future.

Consultant in Fetal Medicine and Obstetrics at St George's Hospital, Dr Asma Khalil, who is leading the project, said: "Crucially, a national UK Registry will provide a tool to assist the improvement of clinical skills and practice and therefore help to provide better patient care and outcomes for babies affected by TTTS."

Tamba CEO Keith Reed said: "We want fewer TTTS tragedies and more TTTS survivors. The sooner this registry is up and running, the sooner we can help families facing this potentially fatal condition.'

For more information on Tamba's TTTS appeal visit www.tamba.org.uk/tttsappeal. To donate to Tamba's TTTS appeal, visit www.justgiving.com/tttsappeal.

For confidential and emotional support for families with multiples, call Twinline on **0800 138 0509**