

New look at mum's impact on baby

KK Hospital to study effect of pre-pregnancy health

By **LINETTE LAI**

DOCTORS believe that a woman's health can indirectly impact the way her child develops, even before the child is conceived. This is because a woman's health before she gets pregnant can affect the course of her pregnancy, which in turn affects the child.

To study this link, KK Women's and Children's Hospital aims to recruit some 900 women who are actively trying for a baby to take part in a rigorous pre-pregnancy study. It will include blood samples, in-depth questionnaires on their lifestyle and even a measurement of their emotional health.

Those who will eventually manage to get pregnant – an estimated 400 women – will undergo follow-up tests. Their children too will be closely tracked up to the age of two.

Some 29 women have been recruited since February, five of whom have since become pregnant.

Associate Professor Jerry Chan, who is director of the hospital's research centre, said the new study is important as there are many things about pre-pregnancy that are still not fully understood.

"How do you predict... which woman is going to deliver prematurely?" he said. "When you know that, and there's a way that you can identify that, you can design strategies to mitigate all these influences and think of how to optimise health for a planned pregnancy."

The new study is called the Singapore Pre-conception Study of Long-term Maternal and Child Outcomes (S-Presto).

It is a collaboration between the hospital, the Agency for Science, Technology and Research, the National University of Singapore and the National University Health System.

It builds upon an older study which looked at how a woman's pregnancy affects her child's development.

Those who want to take part in the new study must be between 18 and 45 years old, and of Chinese, Malay or Indian ethnicity.

Couples who wish to find out more can visit www.s-presto.sg or call 1800-777-3786.

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