

Title: Are new parents aware of the signs and symptoms of hydrocephalus? The importance of head circumference measurements in the first year of a baby's life.

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Introduction

Harry's Hydrocephalus Awareness Trust (Harry's HAT; *registered charity 1183086*) was created in 2018 to improve the lives of children with hydrocephalus in the UK. Early diagnosis and timely, appropriate treatment are crucial in reducing pressure on the brain caused by hydrocephalus for which a large head circumference can be a key indicator. It is vital that baby checks include this measurement and Harry's HAT sought to understand parents' experiences and awareness of hydrocephalus and head circumference measurements.

Materials and methods

In March 2022, 'Bounty' hosted an online survey (Qualtrics^{XM}) on behalf of Harry's HAT to gather insights from new parents with babies aged 0-12 months. Ten binary questions were asked, and a free text response question was included for narrative feedback. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to evaluate quantitative and qualitative responses.

Results

Of 750 survey responses, 67% of parents reported that their baby's head circumference was measured at birth and 66% at the 6–8-week check-up. Only 18% of parents were told why this measurement was important and approximately half did not know that their baby's head should be measured at birth and at the 6–8-week check-up (45% and 54% respectively). 67% of parents had not heard of hydrocephalus and 80% did not know that measuring a baby's head can help detect it. Only 19% saw a health visitor regularly and 47% stated that their health visitor did not measure their baby's head. 94% of parents would support an initiative for health professionals to measure babies' heads until their first birthday.

Conclusions

There is a lack of awareness of hydrocephalus and a need to educate parents about the importance of consistent head circumference measurements in the first year of a baby's life. To this end, Harry's HAT launched their "Get-A-Head" campaign to spread awareness through a range of parent focused communications targeting expectant and new parents across the UK: [Get A Head - Harry's Hat \(harrys-hat.org\)](https://harrys-hat.org)

