

NEWS

# 'We want to increase awareness'

by MICHAEL PICKARD

TWO senior gynaecologists at Watford General Hospital have launched a charity to raise awareness of one of the biggest causes of maternal mortality in the country.

There are between 50 and 60 cases of ectopic pregnancies, where the embryo starts growing after becoming lodged in the fallopian tube, seen at the Vicarage Road hospital each year.

And Laurie Irvine, a consultant obstetrician gynaecologist, and Malcolm Padwick, a consultant gynaecologist, have established the Ectopic Pregnancy Foundation to provide women with information and advice about the condition, which can be discovered six or seven weeks into pregnancy.

The charity receives no funding from the health service, instead relying on grants and donations.

But the money it does collect is used to sponsor research, train doctors in surgery and run a 24-hour patient helpline.

Letters are also sent twice a year to every Accident and Emergency department in the country, to highlight the dangers of missing a diagnosis, while a webpage of frequently asked questions is translated into more than 20 languages.



From left, charity chief executive Laurie Irvine, charity secretary Malcolm Padwick and their colleague Tom Setchell at Watford General Hospital.

Picture 21E2918: HOLLY CANT

Mr Irvine, 53, chief executive of the foundation, said: "Ectopic pregnancy can be quite a serious condition. People don't know how com-

mon it is. People have said it's about one in 150 but there's no agreed figure.

"When I was a junior doctor, one of

the first things I saw was a ruptured ectopic.

"Later on as a house officer, an ectopic pregnancy was the first sur-

gery I did.

"Anything that increases awareness of ectopic pregnancy and answers questions from women who have an ectopic pregnancy, the more information they have the better to make further choices."

Mr Padwick, 52, said as many as 50 per cent of ectopic pregnancies are the result of a genetic disorder in the embryo, while other women may have some damage to their tubes already that can act as a barrier, forcing the embryo to grow before it reaches the uterus.

Mr Padwick, the foundation's secretary, said: "It's still a fairly important cause of death for women in the country on national statistics because diagnosis is often missed."

"It's estimated half of women who do end up dying from ectopic pregnancy have seen a medical professional beforehand and the medical risk has been underestimated."

"It's a big cause of infertility. Some women may never naturally conceive again. If we can make the diagnosis early, we can save the tube and it works again."

"Seventy five per cent will conceive naturally again but it can only be done if it's picked up between six and eight weeks into pregnancy."

For more information, visit [www.ectopicpregnancy.co.uk](http://www.ectopicpregnancy.co.uk).