

INTRODUCTION

The best name to use for pregnancy that advances beyond 42 weeks is post-term. This is consistent with names given to other stages of pregnancy that is preterm and term. Recently, the term prolonged pregnancy is used to refer to those pregnancies advancing beyond the expected date of delivery and post-term is used to define pregnancies that advance beyond 42 weeks (Arias , 1987).

Mongelli et al (1996) suggested that post-term pregnancy relies on an accurate determination of gestational age by LMP in the presence of a regular cycle.

Post-term pregnancy is associated with increased perinatal mortality as reported by Weinstein et al (1996).

Fetal problems may occur with prolongation of pregnancy, the most common are intrapartum fetal distress, fetal trauma when complicated by macrosomia, meconium aspiration and post maturity syndrome (Leveno et al, 1989).

Post-term pregnancy is a common indication for antepartum fetal surveillance, which include non-stress test, contraction stress test, biophysical profile and amniotic fluid index (Leveno et al, 1989).

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to predict which fetuses are likely to experience antenatal and intrapartum complication despite frequent fetal heart rate testing and ultrasound scanning (Robert and Eden, 1989).

The role of antepartum fetal surveillance is to attempt to identify the onset of uteroplacental insufficiency and the development of fetal hypoxia or asphyxia. The testing process must be reasonably cost-effective, acceptable to the patient population, and reliable for the identification of the fetus who might benefit from delivery while minimizing unnecessary intervention (Robert and Eden, 1989).