



**SHIPS – Screening to improve  
Health In very Preterm infantS  
in Europe**

## Born too soon

Worldwide, 15 million babies are born too soon every year, that is more than one baby in ten. While significant advances have been made in recent years to improve the survival chances of preterm babies, long-term consequences of preterm births and their screening are less well understood. To monitor visual and auditory deficits, impaired cognitive ability, psychiatric disorders and behavioural issues, follow-up screening and prevention programmes are essential. They are designed to identify health problems early, to enable interventions for better outcomes and to allow optimal management of health care. Despite the recognised importance of these programmes, little is known yet about their actual spread, application, effectiveness and impact in Europe.

## Aim and scope

The overall aim of the EU-funded project SHIPS is to assess the impact of screening programmes on health, care and quality of life for very preterm infants and their families. Coverage, ability to meet needs, health equity and costs at the population-level are also analysed. New knowledge about assessment tools and methods will be generated.

Thus, the partners will provide:

- A database on existing screening and prevention programmes for very preterm infants
- Data on evidence-based and effective screening programmes and tools to promote them in individual units and on the regional and national levels in Europe
- Guidelines on how to best perform follow-up endorsed by professional and scientific societies as well as user associations



## Supporting partners

SHIPS is a transdisciplinary collaboration of researchers from 19 regions from 11 EU Member States and parent representatives. Expertise from obstetrics, paediatrics, epidemiology and health services research is brought into the project. The pan-European organisation and network to represent the interests of preterm and newborn infants and their families (EFCNI) is involved for parental involvement and outreach. A Parent Advisory Board serves as a further expert panel.



## Structure of the project

SHIPS builds on a unique European resource – the EPICE cohort of 6675 babies born before 32 weeks of gestational age and surviving to discharge home in 19 geographically diverse regions in 2011/ 2012.

At 2 years of age, questionnaires were sent to parents to obtain information on long-term health outcomes based on parental assessments. The aim was to assess motor and cognitive development at 2 years of corrected age in order to carry out standardised comparisons of the outcomes for very preterm infants across Europe in terms of their health, growth and development.

EPICE: Follow up at 2



SHIPS: Follow up at 5

SHIPS comprises data collection on follow-up at the age of 5 with four inter-related studies to be conducted:



The *Study of Health and Wellbeing at 5* will assess reported health and child development, family wellbeing and use of health services (routine follow-up, emergency visits, hospitalisation) with a parental questionnaire.



The *Neurodevelopmental Assessment Study* on cognitive and motor development includes only a sub-set of children who were born below 28 weeks of pregnancy and uses standardised tests.



The *Qualitative Study with Parents* aims to understand families' experiences of follow-up and subsequent care, and to identify the key factors perceived by parents as characterising high performing versus low performing screening and intervention services using in-depth semi-structured personal interviews.



The *Screening Organisation, Process and Content Study* will study the characteristics of regional and unit-based follow-up screening and prevention programmes for very preterm infants, including their mission, target population, duration of follow-up, organisation, content and resource use.

## Contact

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## SHIPS project website



Find more information online at the SHIPS project website about the background, the EPICE cohort, the four sub-studies, all people involved and the parents section. Once published you will also find publications there. Visit us at [www.epiceproject.eu/en](http://www.epiceproject.eu/en)

## Thank you

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