

Late referral for about one in four neonates with critical CHD

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(HealthDay)—A considerable proportion of neonates with critical congenital heart disease (CCHD) are not referred to a cardiac center by age 4 days, according to a study published online June 30 in *Pediatrics*.

David E. Fixler, M.D., from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, and colleagues describe the correlation between timing of referral to a cardiac center and mortality in 2,360 neonates with CCHD, born before [pulse oximetry](#) screening (1996 to 2007). The date of first [cardiac procedure](#) at a cardiac center was used to ascertain the age at referral.

The researchers found that the median age at referral was 1 day, while 27.5 percent of neonates were referred after age 4 days, and no record of referral was found for 7.5 percent of neonates. For those referred at age 0 to 4 days, 5 to 27 days, and with no referral, [neonatal mortality](#) was 18.1, 9.0, and 38.8 percent, respectively. Across two eras within 1996 to 2007, no improvement was seen in age at referral.

"A significant proportion of [neonates](#) with CCHD experienced late or no referral to cardiac specialty centers, accounting for a significant number of the deaths," the authors write.

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