

Data presented at the 26th Congress of the International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (ISUOG)

Newborns do not recognise their mother's voice because they cannot hear it during pregnancy

- **The foetus only responds to voices emitted through the vagina because the abdominal wall muffles the sound from the outside.**
- **The reaction of the foetus differs according to whether the mother's voice or music is emitted inside the vagina.**
- **A new audio player contributes to the study of the unborn baby's response to sound stimuli.**

Rome, 15 September 2016 -. Foetuses do not react to voices that reach them from the outside and this rules out the possibility of newborns being able to recognise their mother's voice. By contrast, the unborn baby does respond to the sound stimuli that reach it through the inside of the vagina, a fact that paves the way for new studies on the influence of this type of stimulation on the baby's post-natal development. This is one of the most striking findings in the data presented by **Dr. Àlex García-Faura, the Scientific Director of the Institut Marquès**, at the 26th Congress of the International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (ISUOG), to be held on 25-28 September in Rome (Italy).

The research data presented by Dr. García-Faura show that foetuses do not hear their parents' voices when they try to speak to them through the mother's abdomen, which acts to muffle sound that arrives from the outside. However, they do respond to sounds emitted intravaginally and also display different responses according to whether music or voice is emitted: 70% of foetuses move their mouths clearly when they are spoken to and 87% also move their tongues when they hear music. This occurs in foetuses from the 16th week of gestation, when they are around 11 cm in length.

"The response is different when we emit music or voice and we believe that this is due to these stimuli activating different brain circuits. Music activates circuits related to emotions", Dr. García-Faura says. According to the study organisers, these results *"pave the way for a new line of research in which there can be analysis of the responses to the acoustic stimulation of babies that have been stimulated during gestation"*. In this way, future research will be able to confirm whether, after birth, babies who have heard their parents' voices during pregnancy respond to these voices differently from those babies who have not been stimulated.

A pioneering device

The study of the different reactions of foetuses to different acoustic stimuli has been developed with the help of an audio player that is a pioneer in its field. This is Babypod[®], the only device that emits music and voice inside the vagina. This



characteristic is particularly important as different studies have shown that foetuses only respond with movement to music and voice when these are emitted through the vagina.

Babypod® emits music and voice at a maximum of 54 decibels, the level of a normal conversation. It is inserted into the vagina like a tampon and connected to a mobile phone. It is completely safe for mother and baby. As well as enabling communication with the foetus, this device has very important medical applications: it enables foetal deafness to be ruled out and [it makes ultrasound scans more effective](#) as, on evoking a response from the baby, it allows foetal structures to be viewed more clearly.

About the Marquès Institute

The Institut Marqués is an internationally-recognised gynaecology, obstetrics and assisted reproduction centre in Barcelona. IM also has offices in Milan, London, Dublin and Kuwait. A leader in innovation, it pursues an important line of research on the benefits of music in the initial stages of life and foetal stimulation.

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