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**TX: 13.03.03 – NHS STILL FAILING TO DETECT DEAFNESS IN CHILDREN**

**PRESENTER: JOHN WAITE**

For over 40 years now most newborn children have been tested for deafness by the same method, it's called the infant distraction test, which makes it sound far more scientific than it actually is - someone claps their hand or shakes a rattle near the child and the medical staff just note whether or not the baby seems to respond. It's positively archaic in today's NHS world of scanners and lasers and notoriously unreliable. So deafness can go undetected or indeed be wrongly detected. Either way it's damaging and distressing for the child and the family and expensive for the NHS. And yet a much more reliable diagnosis system is available, has been available for 10 years, for a few thousand pounds - pocket money for the health service - so why aren't we using it?

Simon Brookes's daughter Lauren is one of the children whose deafness was not detected by the rattle test.

**ACTUALITY**

Tell daddy what that is?

[child noise]

Tell daddy what that is?

[child noise]

**BROOKES**

When she was first born they didn't seem to do any type of hearing test at all initially. She had a 14 - 10 to 14 day review when I think they checked her hearing, which consisted of me sitting her on a lap shaking the rattle either side behind her and if she turned round it was assumed that she could hear well, if she didn't turn round it seemed to be assumed that she was messing about really - that's what babies do, they ignore people. And then she had that test done at six to eight weeks and then again at six to nine months. It was around I think about six to nine months test when we went - I can remember one instance - when I went to the surgery in Newark and she was sat on my lap and I actually started to notice, for the first time, that she wasn't picking up things that I thought she should be and I actually pointed out - I said well I'm not happy with how she's performed on this test. And it was put to me that well we're in a noisy room, the road's close by, there's lots of people in the room and children tend to ignore people or that's what babies do. And it was sort of left as that and I walked out thinking okay then. And then we got he



Indeed and if there is early identification then deaf children can develop language and communication at an equivalent rate to their hearing peers. So you