

Biomarkers to predict stillbirth

New biomarkers found in maternal blood may allow doctors to prevent stillbirth. Scientists in Canada found this after analysing the blood of women who experienced stillbirth. When they compared them to healthy women they noticed a “chemical difference”. They used a mass spectrometer and identified four chemicals that showed up consistently in mothers who experienced stillbirth. Combining this with demographic information about the mothers, the researchers discovered biomarkers for predicting signs of first-trimester stillbirth, including a fifth, previously unknown blood chemical called verruculotoxin which is produced by microbes and fungi. Using this approach, scientists could develop the tools and the technology to screen for many other, preventable illnesses that affect both women and children. Previous research into predicting stillbirth has focussed on genetics. Focussing on chemicals within the body gives scientists a clearer view of the potential causes and reasons. The findings have been published in the *Journal of Maternal-Fetal and Neonatal Medicine*.

India has brought down HIV incidence, but it must do more in removing social stigma

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