Objective: To compare the incidence of preterm delivery within 2 weeks in patients with premature cervical shortening (cervical length less than 1.5 cm) on routine ultrasound and symptoms of preterm labor versus asymptomatic patients with the incidental finding of a shortened cervix less than 1.5 cm.

Study Design: A retrospective cohort study was performed. The cohort included patients from 23 to 28 weeks’ gestation with shortened cervix (cervical length less than 1.5 cm) on routine ultrasound. Two groups were defined: patients with no evidence of preterm labor were compared to patients with symptoms of preterm labor (abdominal tightness, contractions, and vaginal spotting). The incidence of delivery within 2 weeks was determined for both groups. The groups were compared with the Fisher exact test.

Results: A total of 88 patients with cervical length (CL) < 1.5 cm were identified from an ultrasound database. 52 patients had CL < 1.5 cm and no symptoms. Of these, 2 (3.8%) delivered within 2 weeks. 36 patients had a CL < 1.5 cm and symptoms of preterm labor. Of these, 11 (30.6%) delivered within 2 weeks, a statistically significant increase (p=.01).

Conclusion: Premature cervical shortening (CL < 1.5 cm) at 23 to 28 weeks, in the absence of symptoms of preterm labor, is often not associated with preterm delivery within 2 weeks. Following those patients clinically may prevent prolonged hospitalization and allow steroid administration close to the date of delivery.