

Editorial

Midwives: A Crucial Link in the Delivery of Quality Assured Obstetric and Newborn Care

Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava^{1,*} and Prateek Saurabh Shrivastava²

¹*Vice Principal Curriculum, Member of the Medical Education Unit and Medical Research Unit, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute, Ammapettai, Chennai, Tamil Nadu*

²*Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute, Ammapettai, Chennai, Tamil Nadu*

Abstract: Maternal mortality is one of the major public health concerns, with almost 99% of maternal deaths being reported in developing nations. There is no doubt that the number of trained and qualified health care professionals in the rural and remote settings (especially in developing nations) are in immense shortage. In most of the rural and hard to reach settings, midwives remain the critical link between the general population and the health sector, predominantly in the obstetrical care. Midwives have been recognized as the lead worker in the delivery of quality assured care during pregnancy, childbirth and even afterwards. This proposed continuum of care is not only liked by women, but it has even played a remarkable role in minimizing the incidence of preterm births and in improving the health of the newborns. In conclusion, in the global mission to significantly minimize the number of preventable deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth, it is of utmost importance to involve midwives and train them in essential aspects of health care delivery.

Keywords: Maternal deaths, Midwives, World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

Maternal mortality is one of the major public health concerns, with almost 99% of maternal deaths being reported in developing nations [1, 2]. Under the adopted Sustainable Development Goals, it has been targeted to minimize the maternal mortality ratio to < 70/100000 live births [1]. However, the current global estimates depict that on any given day, more than 825 women die owing to the avoidable causes associated with either pregnancy or childbirth [1]. Further, the number of maternal deaths is reported more among young adolescents, in rural communities and in women with poor socioeconomic status [2].

MATERNAL DEATHS: CURRENT SCENARIO AND PREDISPOSING FACTORS

It is an encouraging fact that owing to the implementation of various measures, the maternal deaths have reduced by almost 45% since 1990 [1]. Among various reasons, the provision of the skilled care before, during and after childbirth has accounted for the significant reduction in the number of maternal

deaths [2, 3]. However, it is extremely important to understand that mere presence of a health care facility does not meet the ultimate goal of safe and positive childbirth experience, unless it is delivered with respect and in a dignified manner [1, 3]. There is no doubt that the number of trained and qualified health care professionals in the rural and remote settings (especially in developing nations) are in immense shortage [1-3]. This directly reflects that even today, millions of childbirths are not assisted by a doctor or a trained nurse [1, 2].

MIDWIVES AND THEIR ROLE IN MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

In most of the rural and hard to reach settings, midwives remain the critical link between the general population and the health sector, predominantly in the obstetrical care [3, 4]. In-fact, acknowledging the role of the midwives the World Health Organization has formulated a set of recommendations for the provision of quality assured antenatal care and care during childbirth [3]. Midwives have been recognized as the lead worker in the delivery of quality assured care during pregnancy, childbirth and even afterwards [3-5]. This proposed continuum of care is not only liked by women, but it has even played a remarkable role in minimizing the incidence of preterm births and in improving the health of the newborns [3, 5].

*Address correspondence to this author at the 3rd floor, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute, Ammapettai village, Thiruporur - Guduvancherry Main Road, Sembakkam Post, Kancheepuram - 603108, Tamil Nadu, India; Tel: +919884227224; Email: drshrishri2008@gmail.com

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However, in order to ensure that they work effectively, they have to be educated to provide the full range of midwifery skills in accordance with the identified competencies [3]. In-fact, the available evidence suggest that a fully skilled midwife can meet the 87% overall needs of women & newborns [3]. Among the various competencies identified, maintaining hand hygiene is crucial for midwives, as they can be a source of the resulting sepsis [3, 4]. It is quite striking that sepsis affects 3 million newborns and accounts for 10% of all the reported maternal deaths [3]. The need of the hour is to appeal to all the stakeholders (viz. health professionals, policy makers and patients) to maintain hand hygiene to avoid sepsis in health care, including obstetrics & newborn care [1, 3, 5].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in the global mission to significantly minimize the number of preventable deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth, it is of utmost importance to

involve midwives and train them in essential aspects of health care delivery.

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