

Ensure skilled attendants at delivery

Reduce Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in our country



The ongoing SBA training programme. SBAs serve the community in the field of obstetric care

TAREQ SALAHUDDIN
In our country there are so many health problems. Among them high mortality and morbidity rate of mothers during delivery or immediately after childbirth is remarkable. We should pay attention to the fact to reduce the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), as MMR is considered as an important health indicator. The present MMR is very high, approximately 3.2/1000 live births. There are 3 maternal deaths each hour in Bangladesh in spite of decades of TBA training and approximately 25000 maternal deaths/year during delivery or immediately after childbirth.

In Bangladesh, 90 percent of deliveries take place at home and are being conducted by the Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) and relatives. They can neither recognise the risk factors during pregnancy and delivery, nor be able to deal with the situation as because they are not skillfully trained up. TBAs are not medical professionals. They do not have the lifesaving skills necessary to deal with life threatening problems. They cannot treat women with haemorrhage, eclampsia, obstructed labour or other obstetric complications, which are the main cause of maternal death during delivery

or immediately after childbirth. WHO recognises Skilled Birth Attendants (SBA) as delivery service providers who are trained with skill to deal with normal deliveries along with complications. These days, the number of deliveries conducted by skilled birth attendants is taken as a maternal health indicator. Bangladesh have only 13 percent deliveries conducted by SBA, which include delivery by specialists, doctors, nurses and midwives. Whereas in many of the developing countries, the figure is around 60-80 percent.

In our country we do not have sufficient health centres. Culturally home delivery is more acceptable here. So we need to develop skilled health service providers. There are 25000 Health Assistant (HA) and Family Welfare Assistant (FWA) at present in our country. We can use this resource by training up them.

Bangladesh Government had many strategies in the past to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity. But home delivery situation was never taken much in consideration. Since 90 percent of deliveries take place at home, majority of death (80 percent) also take place in that situation, during and immediately after child birth. Unless

In coming 10-15 years there is very little chance of institutional delivery



Prof. Abdul Bayes Bhuiyan

some skilled personals are not attending the deliveries at home, it is not possible to reduce the maternal mortality and morbidity.

A Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA) in one who is being trained in an Institute with structured curriculum in Midwifery, acquire knowledge and skill and certified by competent authority and then registered by Nursing Council to practice in the community.

Bangladesh had no SBA in the community before. And mothers were left with the TBA who had no skill-based training. The result was persistent high MMR and their morbidity. In early '90s Bangladesh Government took a

strategy of Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC) and programmes were taken to strengthen District hospitals and Upazilla Health Complexes to comprehensive EOC service. EOC service is always a backup service for the grass root level. Whenever there is any complication this backup service centres deal with the complications. But primarily deliveries need to be safeguarded in the community to avoid complications. SBA is the answer for this safeguard. So EOC and SBA programmes are complementary to each other. SBAs can conduct normal delivery at home in a scientific and safe way. As they have sound knowledge about

obstetric procedure as well as treatment during pregnancy a SBA can also identify high-risk pregnancy and they can easily refer these high-risk pregnancy to the appropriate health centres.

An excellent initiative of Prof Abdul Bayes Bhuiyan
To meet the high demand of qualified SBA/midwife in the coming days we should be prepared with sufficient manpower available to meet the demand. But how can we get adequate skilled human resource? Renowned Gynaecologist and Ex President of Obstetric and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh (OGSB) looked at current situation of our country that we have so many HA and FWA who work in the grass root level. If we are able to train up them they can serve the community much better with the skill of obstetric knowledge. As these HA and FWA (specially female) come close contact of the people they can motivate them easily and also refer the high risk pregnancy to the appropriate health centres. With this point of view he surveyed two districts on the facts of SBA. He found that SBAs were well accepted and they looked more confident. Community people were satisfied enough and

happy with their services. The most effective outcome was the referral increased in the Upazilla Health Centre, District Hospitals and so on by these SBAs. He performed this survey with the funding of WHO. When he placed his wonderful report to the Minister of MOHFW. He was pleased to implement a project with the help of development partners.

Now it is a matter of great joy for us that the Government of Bangladesh has decided to train all the FWA and FeHA to make them SBA in phases and thereby covering the whole country. The NGOs and private sector have opportunity to train their paramedics as SBA in the line of pilot, keeping the standard set by the Government programme. The current ongoing SBA training programme started at March 1, 2003. By this programme we will get 10,000 SBA by the year 2010.

Our duty and goal
Now what is our duty? We should engage these SBAs to perform the delivery in the remote areas to ensure safe delivery. Doctors can encourage people to ensure skilled attendants at delivery. There is a hope that in coming 10-15 years there is very little chance of institutional delivery.

Asthma prevention: Tips for home and work

Most of us spend as much as 90 percent of their time indoors. This means that the air quality in your home and workplace play an integral part in your well-being, particularly if you have asthma.

Home or work?
It is critical to first determine where you are when your asthma symptoms arise. It is possible that your home or workplace environment is the source of your asthma triggers. Do your asthma symptoms dissipate or disappear after you have been away from home for several hours? Or do you seem to have more symptoms during the workweek and feel better on the weekends?

If you are not sure, note when your symptoms appear and when they become more intense. You may discover that something specific in your home or work environment is triggering your asthma episodes.

Tips for the home
Here is a list of common household triggers and some tips on how to avoid their effects.

Mold - Moisture and poor ventilation add up to mold and mildew

- Drain refrigerator and air conditioner pans
- Clean bathrooms, kitchens, and basements regularly
- Use a de-humidifier in rooms with high humidity
- Install an outside-vented fan in the bathroom
- Invest in a quality ventilation system for your home
- Keep your gutters clean
- Make sure ground water drains away from your house
- Dust mites - These micro-

scopic spiders are found in household dust and they thrive in warm and humid air. Their waste contains a protein that is an allergen for many people.

- Keep the humidity in your home below 50 percent
- Wash bedding weekly in water that is at least 130°F
- Remove the bedspread at night
- Use allergen-impermeable covers on your mattress and pillows, being sure to tape over zippers
- Use plastic or washable material for window coverings.
- Remove carpets from bedrooms. If you must have carpets elsewhere in the house, low pile carpets that are frequently steam cleaned are preferable to a deep pile. Consider throw rugs that are easily washed in hot water.
- Ask a family member without asthma to dust and vacuum. Stay away until the stirred up dust can settle. If you must vacuum, wear a mask.
- Consider special filters for vacuums that minimise the amount of mite waste that can recirculate into the air.

Pet Dander - Pets shed dead skin flakes that are sticky and adhere to any surface in your home. When breathed into your lungs, they can trigger a reaction.

- The most effective treatment is to avoid animals that trigger your symptoms.
- If you wish to keep your pet, make your bedroom off limits.
- Ask someone without asthma to bathe your cat or dog, or to clean out your pet's cage or litter box on a weekly basis. Animals should be brushed outside to reduce the volume of dander and loose hairs.
- Because pet dander will travel

right through a vacuum cleaner, use HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filters.

- Vacuuming does not clean up the deeper part of the rug. Frequent steam cleaning is preferable. Hardwood, tile, or linoleum floors would be best.
- Consider alternative pets such as turtles, fish, or snakes.

Tobacco smoke and wood burning stoves - These are the primary indoor pollutants linked to the development and aggravation

of respiratory conditions such as asthma.

- If you or someone in your family smokes, stop as soon as possible.
- Secondhand smoke is also a harmful trigger. Make your home smoke-free by asking guests not to smoke in your house.
- If you use a wood burning stove and cannot change to other forms of heating in the near future, be sure the ventilation in the area is good at all times and that plenty of fresh air is circulating in your home.

Forced-air furnace and air conditioners - Many systems are equipped with inadequate filters that remove only large airborne particles and leave a collection of triggers for you to breathe.

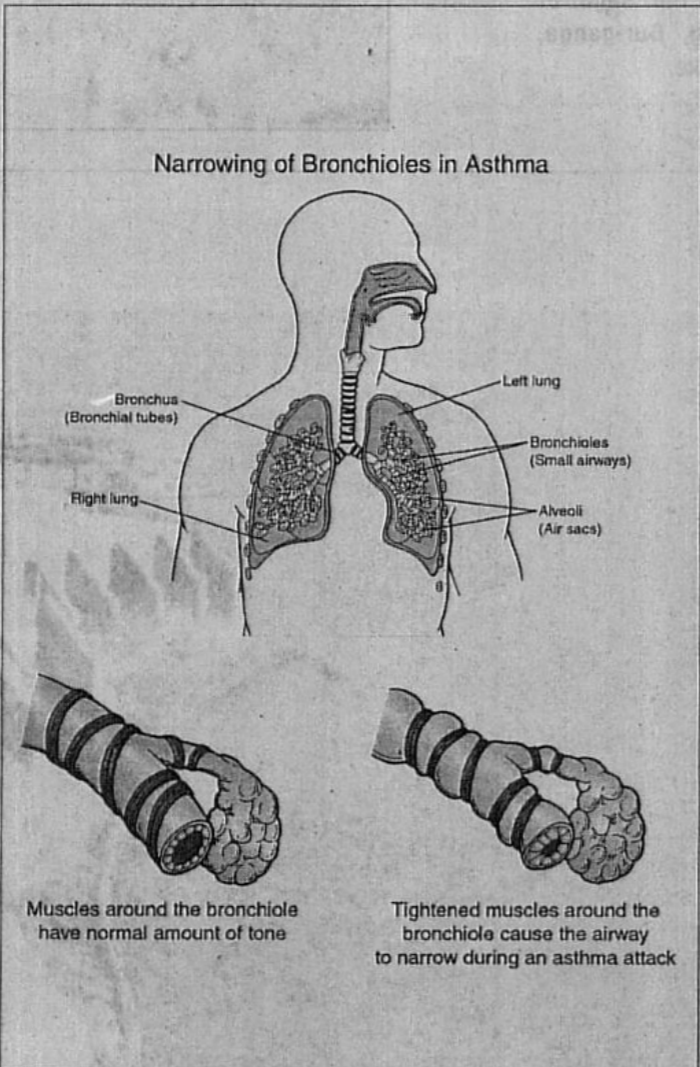
- Look into newer types of filters that can remove 95 percent of dust and other pollutants such as pollen, pet dander, and tobacco smoke.

Tips for the workplace
It is estimated that up to 15 percent of all asthma cases are work related. There are over 250 different agents recognised today as potential causes of occupational asthma. They range from everyday substances like baking flour, wood dust, and animal dander, to complex chemicals like fumigants, dyes, perfumes, car exhaust, and paint fumes. In addition, physical exertion can also exacerbate symptoms in people who have or are susceptible to asthma.

The severity of your asthma will determine the best course of action. Here are some common recommendations:

For mild asthma

- Find ways to limit or eliminate



Chlamydia in men affects fertility

Chlamydia, a common sexually transmitted disease and known cause of infertility in women, can also reduce a man's chance of fathering a child, Swedish researchers found.

"Men should be aware that they can attract the infection and they should get tested and treated for it," said Jan Olofsson of the Scandinavian Fertility Center in Gothenburg.

In a collaborative study with scientists at Sweden's Umea University Hospital of 244 couples treated for infertility, Olofsson discovered that a quarter of the women and a fifth of the men tested positive for antibodies that are a marker of chlamydia infection.

"We found that quite a high number of the couples with antibodies had an ongoing infection," Olofsson added in a telephone interview.

After following the success of the couples for an average three years, the researchers found that antibodies for chlamydia were inversely associated to the overall pregnancy rate. Men with the antibodies had a 33 percent lower rate of fertility than those without them.

"It is quite a high figure," Olofsson said.

About 92 million new cases of chlamydia were diagnosed in 1999, according to the World Health Organisation.

But because the illness often has no symptoms, about 70 percent of women and 50 percent of men do not know they have it.

The illness can be easily treated with antibiotics. If it is diagnosed and treated, it causes no lasting problems in women. But recurrent and severe infections can result in infertility, ectopic pregnancy, pelvic inflammatory disease and pain.

Babies exposed to the infection during birth may develop an eye infection or pneumonia.

Olofsson, who reported the findings in the journal Human Reproduction, said it is not known how chlamydia causes male infertility. Scientists believe it may have an impact on sperm but other mechanisms, and infections, could also be involved.

He advised men with fertility problems to be checked for the infection with a simple blood test and get treatment if they have it.

"I think men should be very worried about this. Men do not go for testing easily," said Olofsson.

He also suggested routine testing for men and women undergoing fertility treatment. An estimated one in six couples suffers from infertility. In about half of cases it is due to a male problem!

Source: <http://www.reuters.com>

Worry affects fertility in women

"Don't worry, be happy" may sound like patronising advice to a woman seeking help in having a baby but it may be just what the doctor ordered, according to research.

A team at the University of California San Diego found that women who worried about either the medical aspects or the cost of their assisted reproductive technology cases were less likely to become pregnant than women who are less concerned.

They studied 151 women seeking in vitro fertilisation, also known as IVF, or another procedure called ZIFT. The women filled out questionnaires about concerns relating to treatment side effects, surgery, anaesthesia, pain recovery, finances, missing work, and having a baby.

Women worried about the medical aspects of the procedure had 20 percent fewer eggs retrieved and 19 percent fewer eggs fertilised than women who were less inclined to worry about it.

Patients who were very concerned about missing work had 30 percent fewer eggs fertilised, Hillary Klonooff-Cohen and colleagues found.

Those who were very concerned about how much the treatment cost were more likely to miscarry.

The results held even when age, race, smoking, type of infertility, number of previous attempts to become preg-



nant, and number of children already born were factored in.

"While no one has elucidated the physiological relationship between women's concerns and the outcomes of their (assisted reproductive technology) cases, we know that stress has a number of negative systemic effects," said Dr. Marian Damewood, President of the American Society of Reproductive Medicine.

"Worry about missing work and fears surrounding ART medical procedures are definitely stress-inducers. By the time patients arrive at ART, they've been through months or years of diagnosis, treatment and the emotional pain of infertility."

She said fertility clinics should do more to ease the stress of their patients.

Source: <http://www.reuters.com>

Medical mystery

Women born in summer have fewer children

Women with summer birthdays tend to have fewer children than those born during other months of the year, according to an Austrian study.

Researchers who studied birth records of 3,000 Austrian women found that birthdays had an impact on reproduction and that females born between June and August had fewer children than other women.

"We found that the women born in July had 0.3 fewer children per woman than those born in December, or to put it another way, 13.4 percent fewer of the 2.24 mean number per woman overall," said Dr. Susanne Huber of the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna.

She added that the findings, which are reported in the

journal Human Reproduction, support the results of earlier studies of birth month and reproduction.

Huber and colleagues at the University of Vienna and the Medical University of Vienna do not know how birth month influences reproductive performance but they believe conditions early in life could be involved.

"In temperate zones the external environment varies with the seasons, so the conditions experienced early in life are the result of a variety of seasonally and socially varying environmental and maternal factors that may all affect early development, causing potential effects on later life events," Huber wrote.

Source: <http://www.reuters.com>