

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

# An innovation to save mother and child

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Bangladesh has made a commendable success in reducing maternal and child death. The country is almost on right track reaching the targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Use of mobile technology is one of the innovative and important components behind the success of reduction of maternal and child deaths. With the mobile revolution in Bangladesh, its use in saving mothers and newborns has now set a model for the whole world.

It was proven over the years that there is no alternative to reach every household preferably by trained professionals to reduce unnecessary deaths. However, it has been a challenging job due to fewer numbers of community workers to cover the whole region and lack of motivation. In this context, wider usage of mobile phone showed advantage to overcome the barriers and served as the best tool to spread information and awareness with minimum cost.

Aponjon mHealth service in Bangladesh has been doing the job to create mass awareness through mobile technology with voice and text messages to



promote behavioural change among the expecting families. The approach covers a larger segment of the country by using both popular media and engages community workers. This is a new and interesting phenomenon. One of the leading social enterprises of the country, D.Net is implementing the service with the assistance of USAID as a part of the

programme agreement with the Government of Bangladesh. The service is also a part of a global initiative directed towards maternal and child health, named Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action or MAMA, which was inaugurated by US Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The service is available through a

common number 16227 from any mobile phone. Apart from voice and text, people have the option to receive a phone call containing message at a chosen time specially for those who have limited knowledge on mobile phone.

Aponjon incorporated a number of other innovations to make it user friendly and pro-poor. Such design also catalysed innovation in technology platform. For example, the cost is very minimum; at least 20% of the total subscribers will receive the service free of charge. However, the average ability to pay was far below the break-even level price, when cost and income are equal. Apart from finding funding from the local sources, Johnson and Johnson, the global partner of MAMA also provides financial support to fill the gap.

Amid success, one mother still dies from pregnancy related complications at every hour and 12 infants die who have not yet reached the age of 1 month. But we have the scope to do better, to change the tragic scenario into joyful event. Only a concerted effort and some innovative solutions like mobile technology can change the trajectory of the millions of mother and children.

## PREGNANCY CARE

### Safety of X-ray

According to the American College of Radiology (ACR), if you should have an X-ray just prior to conception, there is no risk to you or the soon-to-be-baby.

If you were to have an X-ray in week three or four, the risks are probably zero at less than 10 Rads (Rads is a measure of radiation dose). If it is more than 10 Rads that indicates a possible miscarriage. In weeks five through ten, but between 5-10 Rads, they say potential effects are scientifically uncertain and probably too subtle to be clinically detectable. Over 10 Rads and the chances of malformations increase with the dose. In weeks eleven through seventeen, at the 5-10 Rad dose potential effects are scientifically uncertain and probably too subtle to be clinically detectable.

Though ACR notes that you can have IQ damage over the 10 Rad mark, increasing with exposure. Once you hit weeks 18-27, you do not see issues with X-rays until you hit the greater than 10 Rad dose. After week 28, the risks are the same to the baby as the mother. Doses less than 5 Rad are always considered to cause no issues at any point in pregnancy.

While this may all sound very upsetting, the vast majority of plain X-rays, like the kind you had have for a broken bone or at the dentist's office, have few low doses of radiation. In fact, you would need more than 20 abdominal X-rays to hit the 5 Rad dose.

The write up is compiled by Dr Mohammad Azizur Rahman, Consultant Pulmonologist, Ashiyan Medical College Hospital, Dhaka.

### Safety of medications

When you are pregnant, it is important to be careful about taking any medications, even over-the-counter drugs. The American Academy of Family Physicians offers these guidelines for pregnant women:

- Always check with your doctor before you take any supplement, vitamin or over-the-counter medication.
- Speak to your doctor about the need to avoid taking any medication during your first trimester.
- Acetaminophen (paracetamol) is usually a safe option for short-term relief of pain, but check with your doctor before taking it. Do not take Aspirin or other painkiller.
- Avoid medications that are extra-strength or long-acting.
- Do not take combination medications that are meant to treat multiple symptoms.

HEALTH

bulletin

**Inherited colon cancer risk tied to certain foods**

Among people who have a genetic susceptibility to colon cancer, those whose diets are heavy in junk food have an even higher risk, according to a new study published in the journal Cancer.

**Coffee may lower risk of death from mouth cancer**

People who drink more than four cups of caffeinated coffee daily could significantly reduce their risk of death from certain forms of cancer, according to a new study from the American Cancer Society.

Habitual coffee drinkers had about half the risk of dying from cancers of the mouth and pharynx (part of the throat) than others who never drank coffee or only had it occasionally, the researchers found.

## Avoiding aphthous ulcer, the painful oral sore

Aphthous ulcer is a common type of oral ulcer or sore. It is a painful open sore in the mouth, which appears as a white, yellow or gray lesion bordered by a bright area. Aphthous ulcer often appears on the inner surface of the cheeks, lip, tongue and the base of the gum.

People with the ulcer experience burning sensation followed by a bump that then ulcerates. Usually it remains painful for 7-10 days. Acidic foods tend to aggravate the sores and like all ulcers, they are very difficult to treat.

There are over-the-counter medications that may offer relief to the discomfort, but they need to be

started at the first sign of the sore. Aphthous ulcers are very common and tend to occur more often in women than men.

The exact cause of aphthous ulcers is unknown. In most cases, the ulcers develop for no apparent reason in people who are healthy. In some cases, the ulcers are related to other factors or diseases, faulty immune system, changes in hormone levels, some ex-smokers find they develop ulcers only after stopping smoking, emotional or physical stress, injury such as from rough dentures, dental work, hot food, tooth brushing or biting the mouth.



Canker Sores

### Tips to prevent

- Regular use of non-alcoholic mouthwash may help prevent or reduce the frequency of ulcer.
  - Dental braces are a common physical trauma that can lead to aphthous ulcers and dental bracket can be covered with max to reduce abrasion.
  - Zinc deficiency has been reported in people with recurrent aphthous ulcers.
  - Avoid products or food mostly acidic food, which exacerbate ulcers.
  - Improve diet or take dietary supplements containing vitamins or minerals that are effective for preventing certain aphthous ulcer due to deficiency of those vitamins.
- Most ulcer sores go away on their own in a week or two. In extreme painful case, medication might be needed to control pain or expedite healing.

The write up is compiled by Dr Shahjada Selim, working in the Department of Endocrinology, BIRDEM Hospital, Dhaka. Email: selimshahjada@gmail.com



Officers' Club Dhaka recently organised a seminar on hypertension, heart attack and sleep apnea. Dr Mani Lal Aich Litu delivered the keynote presentation in the seminar.



/StarHealthBD

## Knowing for better living

### 7 serious symptoms in children to never ignore !

1. High fever
2. Skin infections or rashes
3. Frequent sore throats
4. Breathing problems
5. Severe stomach bug
6. Stiff neck
7. Sleep problems or change in behaviour

Ensure healthy foods for children

Ensure enough sleep and exercise

Ensure child's physical, mental & social well-being

Keep children safe



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