

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings from the Editor's Desk...!!

Around 2 million babies are stillborn every year globally and if I put it the other way round, one stillbirth happens every 16 seconds. It is one of the most devastating life events not only for the women, families, or society, but also a critical global health problem and the irony is that it still remains a neglected issue in many of the countries, especially in the developing or less developed ones. What is more heartbreaking is that our region has the maximum contributors to these numbers in the world with India topping the list.

Needless to say, this huge public health concern has a lot of repercussions on the parents and the families. Once a stillbirth happens, there are huge amounts of challenges besides trying to find out the cause, investigations to counseling the patient and the relatives, and in the present situation with the litigation and the violence against the medical practitioners being widely rampant, this is an area which requires our immediate attention. The most important part is that we practitioners are not trained in proper grief counseling and handling such situations which not only have a huge impact on the families but also affect us, the healthcare providers, in a big way. I am happy to say that India is taking small steps towards addressing this problem in several ways. The Stillbirth Society of India also is in place and has taken cognizance of the problem and is making efforts to address this problem in the best possible way.



Much of our modern obstetric care in high- and many middle-income countries has been directed at reducing both antepartum and intrapartum care. Identification of these conditions in the antepartum period is usually followed by various types of prenatal screening to detect those fetuses at higher risk for poor oxygenation which may not be understood or be feasible for many. Skilled care during labor, including fetal heart rate monitoring to identify those fetuses in jeopardy, is also very important.

Postdelivery documentation and registration of stillbirth is mandatory but poorly managed and underreported. Posttraumatic stress disorder is common, so help of counselors and psychotherapists should be taken.

Time and again, it brings me back to highlight the importance of respectful and tender loving care as the pillars of managing any patient at any time, and these skill sets have to be deeply inculcated in our present education program. We may not be able to avoid some mishaps, but I am very sure that with proper protocol-based management of every pregnancy topped up with empathy and tender loving care, we will be able to take care of most of the problems arising from such a heartbreaking mishap.

Why our region has such a high prevalence of stillbirths, it should raise a significant concern in the health system in the individual countries. Which will require in-depth spatial analysis to find the hotspots in the region and also look into discrepancies due to underreporting and even misclassification of IUD, stillbirth or neonatal death and then strategize protocols and policies along with strengthening the health facilities and the antenatal care services to reduce this humongous number of stillbirths happening in the region.

It is also important that healthcare workers and the communities are trained and encouraged to destigmatize the whole issue of stillbirth and urged to do proper reporting and investigations wherever possible. At the same time, we need to develop focused interventions at the grassroots levels to prioritize the maternal and child health.

Being an optimist, I always feel that we can do it and India has made considerable progress in reducing the number of stillbirths in the recent few years.

I would like to say every stillborn baby is a tragedy. Majority of them can be prevented with a strong will and proper primary healthcare system along with high level of political commitment and investment. Let us all work towards this for the next decade.

I hope you are relishing the material in our continually developing journal of SAFOG, which encompasses a multitude of fresh perspectives within the realm of insightful publications.

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