Dam Burst of Emotion

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ABSTRACT

WHO estimates that every year around 15 million babies are born preterm. Of these, around 1 million babies die due to complications of preterm birth. Survival is dependent on the quality of health care available to these babies. It is estimated that more than 3/4th of babies can be salvaged by timely and appropriate care. The author considered herself to be one of the privileged members of society, being a doctor themselves, living in a metropolitan society and having access to the best healthcare in the country. However, this overconfidence was rudely shaken when they ran from one hospital to another in search of a ventilator for their as yet unborn baby. The author’s pregnancy and child birth brought them closer to the millions of parents who undergo the trauma of having a premature baby.

Keywords: Pregnancy, Preterm, Resident, Surfactant, Ventilator

It’s a generally accepted fact in Medicine fraternity that resident doctors are at a higher risk of complications in pregnancy. Women who become pregnant during their residency encounter various physical and emotional stressors such as heavy workload, long working hours, erratic work schedule, risk of radiation exposure and many more. (Blake, Oates, Applegate, & Kuligowska, 2006; Lashbrook et al., 2003) And everything places them in the group of high risk pregnancy. As residents in Obstetrics and Gynaecology in a busy tertiary care hospital, we had ample opportunity to witness this phenomenon. The irony of our profession was often the topic of discussion in our relatively free time. However, no talks whatsoever could prepare me for my pregnancy and its trial.

I was in my seventh month of pregnancy and my baby hadn’t made any movement in three days. The last couple of days had been very tiring, my duties hectic, I reasoned. But the ultrasound was saying something else. Foetal heart decelerations said the radiologist, Decreased blood flow. He gave me a biophysical score of 4/10. The biophysical profile is a noninvasive test that predicts the presence or absence of foetal asphyxia and, ultimately, the risk of foetal death in the antenatal period. (ACOG. Antepartum fetal surveillance, 1999) My score of 4/10 at 32 weeks, with a low lying placenta and transverse lie meant immediate operative delivery. And I was stunned. I called up my husband and told him, I am going to hospital for caesarean section, meet me there. He thought I was joking, Even I thought so...

Sorry, no paediatric ventilator. I was hearing this refrain for the fourth time. Were so many babies ill or were there so few...
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