

Training Midwives and Other Cadre of Health Workers Using a Solar-Charged Device in Ethiopia

Dear Editor,

Ensuring the wellbeing of pregnant women and providing them with appropriate care and support for a good outcome has been acknowledged as one of the most important public health priorities of the health sector.^[1,2] Even though a wide range of potential risk factors can result in maternal deaths, it has been identified that provision of skilled care during and after the birth of the child can save the lives of thousands of women and newborn child.^[1,2]

However, considering the shortage of primary care physicians or obstetricians in the rural settings, midwives and nursing staff have been identified as potential candidates for the delivery of essential care during childbirths.^[1] At the same time, these midwives have been assigned the task of offering antenatal care, creating awareness among members of the community regarding the services offered in health facilities, motivate women for institutional delivery, and referring women to higher centers for management of high-risk women.^[1,3]

Realizing the scope of the midwives in meeting the global reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health-related goals, especially in rural and remote settings, there is a great need to not only increase their numbers but even augment their capabilities by organizing periodic training sessions, as well as by providing them technology-based assistance to improve their understanding regarding different obstetric situations.^[1,3,4] Different forms of training (theoretical and practical) sessions and evaluation methods have been adopted for the skill development of midwives. However, because of the lack of periodicity of these sessions, significant gaps have been identified in the execution and coordination of outreach programs, detection of common obstetric and gynecological conditions, and offering appropriate guidance and counseling to the women.^[4] In addition, substantial competence gaps that restrict the ability of midwives to expedite the progress toward the accomplishment of the health-related development goals.^[3,4]

In an attempt to improve the competence of midwives in Ethiopia, a portal device has been developed, which works on solar battery and contains preloaded multimedia training lessons.^[4] It is a mobile-based learning system working on Android technology.^[4] The portable device contains lessons which cover a wide range of topics, namely the importance of antenatal care, ways to identify danger signs, necessity to be prepared for anticipated complications, management of obstetric complications, post-abortion care, nutrition, family planning, and essential newborn care.^[3,4] These

training materials are the result of collaborative work of the United Nations Population Fund, World Health Organization, and Johns Hopkins Program for International Education in Gynecology and Obstetrics, and are in accordance with the international standards.^[4]

Since the launch of the device in March 2016, more than 2700 midwives and health workers have been trained, and it has been very well accepted by the trainees.^[4] The device has improved the quality of education, the skills of health workers in managing complications and their empowerment to provide respectful health care services, and has been also used for mentoring health professionals working in remote health institutions.^[3,4] Moreover, as the device works on solar power, it has neutralized the challenges of interrupted electricity supply or poor internet connectivity, which is extremely common in rural areas.^[4]

To conclude, there is an immense need to empower midwives to ensure that they provide sensitive and quality-assured healthcare to pregnant women so that they can remember it as a positive pregnancy experience.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

**Saurabh R. Shrivastava¹,
Prateek S. Shrivastava¹,
Jegadeesh Ramasamy¹**

¹Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Ammapettai, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Address for correspondence:

Dr Saurabh R. Shrivastava,
Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Ammapettai Village, Thiruporur - Guduvancherry Main Road, Sembakkam Post, Kancheepuram - 603 108, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: drshrishri2008@gmail.com

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