

## Stressing effective management of labour

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'Optimum care has to be given to women before, during and after labour'



Expert advice: Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, president of International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics, United Kingdom. — Photo: M. Periasamy

“Three hundred out of one lakh deliveries in India result in maternal death,” spelt out Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, president of the International Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. He was in the city recently for the signing of the third edition of the book *Management of Labour* at Women's Centre.

“For every mother who dies during child birth, there are 20 others who suffer from complications such as fistula,” he told *The Hindu*. Sir Arulkumaran remarked about how labour is the most dangerous period in a woman's life. “Optimum care has to be given to women before, during and after labour. Failure of this will lead to a lot of complications and sometimes, maternal deaths.”

*In 1994, during a meeting held at Women's Centre, Sir Arulkumaran delivered lectures on effective management of labour. It was suggested then that he compile those lectures in the form of a book. Thus came the first edition of Management of Labour in 1999. The second edition was brought out in 2005. When asked about the need for the third edition, he said, “The way we look at mothers has changed drastically these days. A few years ago, if a mother in labour bled extensively, we would simply advise administration of a combination of drugs. But these days, doctors can insert a uterine balloon and fill it with, say, sterile water. This will stop bleeding immediately.” He said these changes and advancements had been dealt with in the book.*

*“The woman in labour is the focus of any obstetrician,” said Gita Arjun, co-editor of the book, in an e-mail interview. The Director, and Obstetrician and Gynaecologist of E V Kalyani Medical Centre, Dr. Arjun added, “We want the best outcome for both the mother and the baby. The third edition of Management of Labour has been completely revamped so that the practitioner can find out more about current advancements and guidelines in science.”*

*Sir Arulkumaran noted that the maternal deaths in Tamil Nadu had decreased over the past few years. But there was scope for improvement, he said.*

*“When we look at India as a whole, it's tough to make a comment. A lot of problems lie in the periphery of the country. This is because of the lack of skilled birth attendants.”*

*He remarked that India too, like Sweden or Indonesia, could accommodate midwifery institutions.*

*“These institutes can work towards producing skilled midwives and route them to the fringes of the country, where there is a serious lack of good medical facilities.”*

*The doctor also stressed the importance of nutrition during pregnancy and child birth. “A female child needs more iron and other nutritive supplements right from a very young age. This prepares her for pregnancy.” He*

*suggested that hospitals could offer free supplements to every mother, right from her initial days of pregnancy, thereby preventing a few complications during labour.*

*Dr. Arjun, who also took part in the book signing event, said, “To go through labour comfortably and to lessen their anxiety, a couple should get as much knowledge about the process as possible.” She pointed out that the couple could attend ante-natal classes and learn about relaxation techniques for labour.*

*“Management of Labour is invaluable for both the doctors undergoing training and the doctors already in practice. It is imperative that we stay up to date with our medical knowledge to avoid catastrophes.”*