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Nurses' training on WHO check-list critical for safe delivery

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NEW DELHI: In what may improve India's maternal and neonatal health in future, medical researchers have shown that a two-month training to nurses and midwives on a WHO-made safe delivery check-list can significantly improve the clinical behaviour even inside a poorly-equipped labour room.

It is estimated approximately 46% maternal deaths, over 40% stillbirths and 40% newborn deaths take place on the day of the delivery.

The new study – conducted on 300,000 women and new born in Uttar Pradesh – India's most populous state with poor health infrastructure – illustrated how coaching the birth attendants on following a 28-parameter check list improve the clinical behaviour inside the labour rooms and may eventually contribute to better maternal and child health care.

"The check-list – prepared by the World Health Organisation – is something similar to what the pilots do before flying a plane. It is supposed to support the nurses as there are things that people tend to forget," Vishwajeet Kumar, principal investigator of the study and executive director of Community Empowerment Lab in Lucknow told DH.

After two months of coach-



ing, the trained birth attendants completed 73% of the essential birth practices, which is 1.7 times better than the performance of another untutored group that could do only 42% of these practices.

Proper administration of oxytocin immediately following childbirth to prevent maternal haemorrhage was 80% in the intervention facilities as against 21% in control facilities. Also initiation of breastfeeding (70% in intervention and 4% in control groups) and skin-to-skin contact (79% in intervention and 11% in control facilities) between mother and newborn to warm the baby was significantly higher in intervention facilities.

The improved clinical behaviour, however, did not alter

the maternal and child mortality rate, which could be due to limited study period. "We conducted the study for about eight months, whereas impact on mortality can be seen only after three years," Kumar said.

Such a check-list would be a part of the Union Health Ministry's upcoming initiative to improve the quality of labour rooms across the country. The government scheme aims to achieve tangible results within the next 18 months.

The study – published in the Dec 14 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine – was carried out by a large international team of medical scientists including researchers from Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Belgavi.

DH News Service

New blood test can diagnose two cancer types

WASHINGTON, PTI: Scientists have developed a blood test using infrared spectroscopy that may diagnose two types of cancer, lymphoma and melanoma.

The findings, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, suggest infrared spectroscopy can detect biochemical changes induced by non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a solid tumorous condition of the immune system, and subcutaneous melanoma, a deadly form of skin cancer.

The technique has diagnostic potential as a screening technique for these cancers, according to researchers, including those from Georgia State University in the US.

They used mid-infrared spectroscopy to analyse blood serum derived from experimental mice and differentiate mice with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and subcutaneous melanoma from healthy mice and also between these two tumorous conditions.

The mid-infrared spectral region of the electromagnetic spectrum is frequently used to characterise biological samples at the molecular level. Studies have found the incidence rates of cutaneous melanoma have increased in many regions.