

A midwife's job

MIDWIVES are primary healthcare providers in most countries where birth is an integral part of family life.

A midwife is a person who must be able to give the necessary supervision, care and advice to women during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period, to conduct delivery on her own responsibility, and to care for the newborn and the infant.

A modern midwife is a health professional who provides holistic healthcare to the childbearing woman and newborn. She respects a wide range of women's needs, including personal and cultural values.

Focusing on the natural processes of pregnancy, labour and birth, she combines traditional skills and modern medical techniques to safeguard normal childbirth.

The midwife maintains associations with physicians and other healthcare providers to ensure that the mother and child have the best knowledge and technology available.

In Pakistan much attention is required to be paid to the profession of midwifery because every hour three women die due to maternal causes and 30 newborn babies die in the first month of their life.

There are interventions needed to reduce maternal and newborn mortality like skilled birth attendance, referral and transportation systems, health facilities providing emergency obstetric and newborn care (EmONC), and awareness of the community on key health messages and behaviours.

The midwife can assist in the prevention of maternal and child mortality and morbidity by providing nutritional education, family planning services and birth spacing.

Skilled attendants for pregnancy care and birth are lacking.

This lack of skilled attendants is disturbing since many maternal and infant deaths and morbidities are preventable during the prenatal period as well as during labour and birth.

There are several reasons contributing to the poor image of the midwife profession. Midwifery students have many concerns which remain unaddressed because of lack of support of institutions.

There is not only lack of funds and clinical equipment but also a shortage of well-qualified faculty.

I being a legislator of Sindh and a member of the Pakistan Nursing Council request the authorities concerned to increase the stipend of midwives equal to those of Punjab, that is Rs4,230 a month, while in Sindh they get Rs1,050 only per month, upgrade the living status of midwives, and improve their clinical practice and prescribed curriculum. It is the need of the hour that the condition of midwives should be improved as they are the keystone of the nation's healthcare.

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