Best Practice in Labour and Delivery

Second Edition
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Edited by

Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran

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I dedicate this book to mothers, babies, their families and care givers who have helped us to understand the process of labour and delivery. The advanced scientific knowledge gained from studying labour and delivery has helped us to improve the safety and quality of the care we provide.
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Preface to the Second Edition

*Best Practice in Labour and Delivery* is a comprehensive textbook of 33 chapters that cover most topics of importance that one should know in labour and delivery. Starting from basic anatomy and physiology, the book covers the entire spectrum of problems encountered in labour and delivery. Special attention is paid to topics of importance that result in maternal and fetal morbidity and mortality. The layout and rational arrangement of chapters makes the book easy to navigate and read; this is made more simple by use of easy-to-assimilate tables, care pathways, suitable illustrations and pictures.

Each chapter has been contributed by nationally and internationally recognized experts. In addition to the latest evidence from guidelines published by various colleges from the UK and other countries, and the Cochrane Database, the authors have distilled the recommendations from the NICE guidelines on intrapartum care published in December 2014 and the recommendations from the UK Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths, released in January 2015. Most authors have carried out original research into the topics chosen and their work blends into the respective chapters. In addition to technical aspects of labour and delivery, the important aspects of non-technical skills needed for good practice, prioritization to give care, clinical governance, risk management and objective structured assessment of technical skills are dealt with in detail. These chapters will help each and every consultant and trainee, especially those who have opted to train in advanced labour ward practice.

I am grateful to the contributors, who have sacrificed a lot of their time to provide us with the excellent chapters. Even with scrupulous proofreading there may be mistakes, and some facts may be wrong or controversial. I would be most grateful to the readers for writing to me as the editor, or to the publisher, so that we can rectify any problems in the next reprint.

Yours sincerely,
Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran
Preface to the First Edition

Those privileged to look after women during their labours and deliveries have a duty to practise to the highest standards. A clear understanding of what constitutes best practice will help to ensure the safety and health of mothers and babies through parturition.

Whilst the encouragement of normality is implicit, abnormality in labour must be recognized promptly and, when necessary, must be appropriately managed to ensure best outcome.

An understanding of normality and when and how to intervene are the keys to good clinical care. This textbook is an encompassing reference covering all the essential information relating to childbirth; it offers clear practical guidance across the width of labour and delivery.

We are very grateful to those well-known leading experts who, despite their busy lives, have made such excellent contributions to this definitive text. Each chapter offers a modern authoritative review of best practice with the evidence base for good clinical care necessary to optimize outcome through appropriate clinical management and justifiable intervention.

Whilst this is an ideal textbook for those training or taking examinations in labour ward practice, it offers all those professionals caring for the labouring woman a modern, evidence-based approach, which will help them understand and deliver the best possible clinical care. The importance of team working, prioritizing and the organization of maternity care receive appropriate emphasis with clear guidance and practical advice.

Guided by appropriate, clearly defined management pathways, based on national guidance, attending professionals will be best placed to improve safety and the quality of the labour process for both mother and baby.

The auditing and monitoring of standards and outcomes are vital to the organization and improvement of maternity services. The recent introduction of Clinical Dashboards (Appendix A) promises to be a major advance by facilitating the monitoring through traffic light recording of performance and governance (including clinical activity, workforce, outcomes risk incidents, complaints/women’s feedback about care) against locally or nationally agreed benchmarked standards.

This book contains the most up-to-date references and evidence base, including from the Guidelines and Standards of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (www.rcog.org.uk) and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (www.nice.org.uk). We believe that this textbook will be of great value for all midwives and doctors overseeing and managing childbirth.

Richard Warren
Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran
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The editor would like to sincerely thank the authors for their excellent contributions to the second edition of the book. I thank Mrs Sue Cunningham for inviting and reminding the authors and for collating and finalizing the edited chapters. I am most grateful to Nick Dunton and Kirsten Bot of Cambridge University Press for their constant support and for their patience in producing this book.

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