



INDIA BIRTH NETWORK

Improving care for all



A powerful research-led collaborative

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The India Birth Network aims to improve the experiences of mothers and babies across the country.

Worldwide, 2.6 million babies die in the final three months of pregnancy or during childbirth (stillbirths) with 303,000 maternal deaths a year. Two-thirds of these deaths could be prevented.

Our network, backed by the Indian Council for Medical Research and the British Council, brings together midwives, doctors and researchers from India and the UK to improve outcomes for mothers and babies in India. Work focuses on building research collaboration, innovation and change to support government hospitals in five of the worst performing areas in India – Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Led by Professor Jiji Matthews, a global specialist at the world-renowned Vellore Christian Medical Centre in Tamil Nadu, and Professor Andrew Weeks of the University of Liverpool, our aim is to empower staff by sharing best practice and developing international and national partnerships to support research.

If improvement is not accelerated the country will fail to meet its Sustainable Development Goals and the World Health Organisation's Every Newborn Action Plan Goals for maternal and neonatal mortality and stillbirth.



6 While maternal and newborn outcomes are improving in India, there are several states that are still lagging behind. In a country as large and diverse as India we know many people share our passion to make a difference to women's lives and this network is just the start of a movement which will make a real difference. 9



Professor Jiji Mathews

Appropriately trained Nurse Midwives, with international partnerships, can play a vital role in strengthening the function of the overcrowded and understaffed birthing units. Our network aims to foster the development of these roles and help research become a more routine part of maternity care in India, ensuring women's experiences are monitored, recorded and learned from.

Evidence-based, pragmatic intrapartum care, delivered by multi-disciplinary teams is critical in giving women the best birth experience and babies the best start in life. However, in India a lack of standardised care can make this a major challenge.

The well-recognised phenomenon of 'too little too late' and 'too much too soon' has led to poor outcomes for mother and child, despite very high caesarean section rates. The network will work with local maternity units to analyse the cause for high caesarean section rates, and examine ways to optimise intervention.

Worldwide

2.6 million babies die in the final 3 months of pregnancy or during childbirth (stillbirths)

45% of deaths among children under the age of five are newborn deaths

303,000 maternal deaths occur each year

Two-thirds of these deaths could be prevented

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

Two global workshops were held online and face-to-face in early 2022 to create a platform to build relationships, hear from global experts, share best practice in maternal care, encourage networking, mentorship and expanding out multidisciplinary.

Following a two day online conference in the Autumn of 2021, a hybrid meeting was held in January 2022: this saw UK delegates meet face to face with colleagues from India and elsewhere join online.

Participants attended from over 40 maternity centres across 11 Indian states and 20 centres in the UK.

Resources have already been developed and the focus has been on:

- participating in meaningful data collection to inform obstetric care such as through the 'Ten Group Classification System' (TGCS, or 'Robson criteria').
- improving knowledge exchange across Indian states to improve outcomes in low resource areas
- promoting doctor-nurse-midwife teams to foster integrated care in birthing units
- framing research questions based on identified gaps in clinical research, especially using misoprostol



NEXT STEPS

We aim to harness and build on the enthusiastic response to the setting up of the Indian Birth Network. The first steps are to:

- Drive collaborative research
- Create a digital repository to collate evidence-based guidelines and local audit data
- Build capacity through research skills training for nursing staff
- Promote evidence-based medicine with practical application in India

“Evidence-based, pragmatic intrapartum care, delivered by multi-disciplinary teams is critical to give women the best birth experience and babies the best start in life.”



Professor Andrew Weeks



NETWORK STEERING GROUP

Network members



Jiji Matthews
(co-Chair)



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Tina Lavender



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