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Looking forward to more and better midwifery in Asia in 2017

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As we are drafting this end-of-year editorial, an important news this autumn was the World Health Organization (WHO) changing its recommendation on antenatal care. WHO issued a new series of recommendations to improve quality of antenatal care in order to reduce the risk of stillbirths and pregnancy complications and give women a positive pregnancy experience. One key change is to increase the number of recommended antenatal check-ups from four to eight. According to the WHO evidence suggests that a higher frequency of antenatal contacts by women and adolescent girls with the health system is associated with a reduced likelihood of stillbirth. The 2016 WHO recommendations have an element of flexibility around the delivery of antenatal care based on countries’ needs and human resources. Thus antenatal care could be provided by midwives or other trained health workers in health facilities or through community outreach services.

This year we have seen some interesting developments around midwifery education in South Asia. Nepal has started formal midwifery training. Whilst in the Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) offered funding to improve the quality of midwifery education and create an enabling environment for a midwifery-led care in Bangladesh.

Zika virus was in the news this year especially prior to and during the Olympic Games in Brasil. The infection has been linked to severe birth defects in some 30 countries, with more than two thousand cases of nervous-system malformations reported in Brazil alone. Earlier this year there were worries that travellers to the Olympics might spread the virus across the globe. The Zika virus needs mosquitoes such as the ones spreading Dengue fever and malaria. The key fear was that the Zika virus would spread with visitors to areas where malaria is endemic. Fortunately, this did not appear to have happened and in November of this year the WHO declared that the Zika virus was no longer a global medical emergency. However, it is still classing the virus and related microcephaly among babies as a ‘significant and enduring’ threat. The WHO reminds us to be vigilant as Zika has not gone.

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We wish all friends of The Journal of Asian Midwives a Happy, Healthy & Peaceful 2017!

Professors Rafat Jan & Edwin van Teijlingen

References:


