

# OBSTETRIC PRACTICES OF INDIGENOUS DAIS

(A Study in Dharavi Slums)

by

SURAJA PRABHU

and

GOPA KOTHARI

## SUMMARY

Dais of Dharavi slums were studied for their obstetric practices and were assessed for their training needs. 50% of the dais showed their desire to take up training.

It is felt from this study that there is a need to develop a continuous training programme for TBA (Dai) in rural as well as urban slum areas. This will lead to decrease in maternal and infant morbidity and mortality and certainly help us in decreasing perinatal mortality rate, and achieving the goal of "Health for All by year 2000 AD".

### *Introduction*

Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) are seen all over the world. They are known by different names in different countries. As far as India is concerned, TBA or the 'DAI' has been a well known figure. Even today, with the extension of medical facilities to the rural area, only a small percentage of deliveries take place in hospital or are attended by trained paramedical staff and the greater burden of providing obstetric care continues to be shouldered by indigenous village dais (1). They provide a culturally acceptable package of services, both during prenatal and postnatal stages (3).

At a W.H.O. Expert Committee held on promotion and development of traditional medicine manpower, especially training of traditional birth attendants was developed. In countries where Dais are recognised, considerable numbers have been trained and used in basic health services, during last 25 years (4). In India also, training the dais and utilising them should become a common practice.

### *Aims and Objectives*

- (1) To study obstetric practices of indigenous Dais in Dharavi Slums.
- (2) To determine the training needs of Dais to make them more effective in the delivery of maternal and child health services.

---

*From: Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, L.T.M.M. College, Sion, Bombay 400 022.*

*Accepted for publication on 31-8-84.*

### *Material and Methods*

Out of total 19 areas of Dharavi, 4 areas were selected by random sampling method.

Totally 76 Dais who were residing in these areas and were wellknown to the dwellers of these areas were interviewed. They were surveyed for their socio-economic data, knowledge regarding obstetric practice, knowledge regarding sepsis prevention, motivation for family planning etc. To confirm the information provided by these dais and to know how dais put into practice their knowledge of obstetrics, home deliveries were also observed.

#### Results and Discussion

42 per cent of the dais belonged to the age group of 56 years and above. 45% of the dais had experience in the field for more than II years. 55% of them were of the widowed group.

Dais earn meagre amount mainly in the form of grains or a saree, after conducting delivery. It is only after the delivery, they get involved in massaging work and can earn amount ranging from Rs. 25|- to Rs. 150|- per delivery. 45% of them were involved in other occupations like household work, selling miscellaneous things and broom making etc. (Table 1). 55% of them were the sole earning members of their families.

TABLE I

Distribution of Dais According to Working Pattern

	Nos.	%
Delivery only	10	13.16
Delivery and massaging	32	42.10
Delivery, massaging and other	34	44.74
Total	76	100.00

35.5% of the dais have learnt the profession either from their mother or mother-in-law (Table 2). Only 1 out of 76 dais was a trained one and she had taken training for a month from one of the Kerala

TABLE II  
Source of Obstetric Knowledge

Source	Nos.	%
Mother/Mother-in-law	27	35.52
Other Dai in the area	12	15.78
Relative/Friend	18	23.68
Nurse	4	5.26
Self	14	18.42
Training Centre	1	1.31
Total	76	100.0

Primary Health Centres. However, from the obstetric knowledge point of view, she was hardly better-off than the others.

44% of the dais used 'Knife' for cutting the umbilical cord. The second common instrument used was blade (18.42%). The other instruments used were scissors and sickle.

Out of total 76 dais, only 10 were literate and remaining 66 were illiterate. The following information was revealed by literate dais. All had provided A.N.C. to their clients ( $X^2 = 12.79$ ) — Significant —  $p < 0.001$ ). Four of them had also carried out vaginal examination. Though all of them had sterilized the cord severing instrument, 8 of them had not taken any care to prevent sepsis e.g. handwashing, cutting the nails before conducting delivery etc. All of them had also carried out follow up of their clients.

When illiterate dais were studied, it was revealed that 52 dais out of 66 had not taken any care to prevent sepsis and none of them had sterilized the cord severing instrument. 15.15% of them had not carried out any follow up after conducting delivery.

#### Acknowledgements

The authors are thankful to the Dean,



L.T.M.G. Hospital, Sion, for allowing them to publish the hospital data.

References

1. Govt. of India: Training of Dais. Primary Health Centre, Training Guide, Part III, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi.

Primary Health Centre, However, the obstetric knowledge of the dais was mostly better than the other

of the dais used. In carrying the manual work. The second group instrument used was glass and other instruments used were glass and

Out of total 52 dais only 10 were literate and remaining 42 were illiterate. The following distribution was observed in their data. All had passed 7th to 10th class ( $X^2 = 12.70$  - significant) -  $p < 0.001$ . Four of them had also passed their final year of the medical examination. Though all of them had received the cord cutting instrument 8 of them had not taken any care to prevent any complication during the safe delivery, conducting safe delivery. All of them had also carried out following up of their clients.

When these dais were studied, it was revealed that 32 dais out of 52 had not taken any care to prevent any complication of their but notified the cord cutting instrument. 12.1% of them had not carried out any follow up after conducting delivery.

The author is thankful to the Dean

2. John Hopkins University: Traditional Midwives and Family Planning Population Report, J. No. 22, May 1980.  
 3. Kakar, D. N.: Dais—The Traditional birth attendants in village India, New Asian Publishers, Delhi, 1980.  
 4. W.H.O.: Technical Report Series 622-1978. The Promotion and Development of traditional medicine, Traditional Birth Attendants.

12 per cent of the dais belonged to the age group of 30 years and above. 50% of the dais had experience in the field for more than 11 years. 50% of them were of the widowed group. This with average income mainly in the form of grains in a year, after conducting delivery. It is only after the delivery they get involved in housework and other domestic work. It is observed that 50% of them were illiterate. The following distribution was observed in their data. All had passed 7th to 10th class ( $X^2 = 12.70$  - significant) -  $p < 0.001$ . Four of them had also passed their final year of the medical examination. Though all of them had received the cord cutting instrument 8 of them had not taken any care to prevent any complication during the safe delivery, conducting safe delivery. All of them had also carried out following up of their clients.

TABLE I  
Distribution of Dais according to Delivery Pattern

Delivery Pattern	No.	%
Delivery only	10	19.23
Delivery and counselling	22	42.31
Delivery, counselling and other	21	40.46
Total	53	100.00

75% of the dais have been the post-graduate from the medical or nursing school (Table 2). Only 1 out of 10 dais was a technical one and she had taken training for a month from one of the hospitals