

## Invited Book Review: Male Involvement in Improving Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health

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### About the Reviewer



**Dr. Animesh Chandrakant Gandhi** works as an Assistant Professor since the past three and half years in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the BYL Nair Charitable Hospital in Mumbai. He has completed his graduation and post-graduation at the Seth GS Medical College and KEM Hospital, Parel. He is a very avid learner and went ahead to complete ICOG fellowship and a German University Diploma in Advanced Gynaecological Minimal Invasive surgery. He also plays an active role as a Deputy Co-ordinator for the FIGO-FOGSI PPIUCD Initiative which is an International program for immediate post-partum family planning under the aegis of FIGO and FOGSI run at the BYL Nair Hospital.

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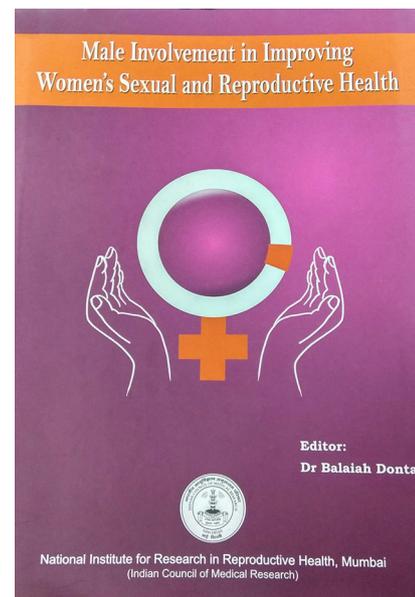
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National Institute for Research in Reproductive Health hosted an International Conference entitled 'Male Involvement in Improving women's sexual and reproductive health—Evidences, Actions and Possibilities' from 28 February to 2 March 2016 at Mumbai. This book is a compilation of the 27 papers presented at the conference as part of its proceedings.

The Editor Dr Balaiah Donta is a Scientist 'G' at NIRRH and along with his team at NIRRH was instrumental in organizing the above conference. A complex subject like this requires a well-organized presentation and so the book is thoughtfully divided into various sub-topics. The book is primarily intended for proponents of social sciences, all healthcare workers dealing with female welfare, community medicine, policy makers from government organizations and even lawyers who deal with the trends of the social fabric in our country.

Female well-being is the best investment any society can make. As males comprise around half of the society, it is imperative that they contribute handsomely for the cause. The various articles present before us the honest ground reality by exploring the involvement of men, perceived or actual, in family and financial matters across lower socio-economic groups which form a majority of India's population. The exposure to various beliefs and traditional practices of either the tribals of Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, or in Rajasthan, Orissa, West Bengal or other rural and urban areas leave the reader in a deep state of realization as to how much work still needs to be done in this field. The proven lack of male involvement in female healthcare (other than maternity related) due to increasing financial burden presents a stark reality of families across India.

The efforts of healthcare workers like the psychiatrists from NIMHANS, Bangalore, in counselling spouses of females suffering from post-partum psychiatric disorders are very inspiring. Clinicians also have to consider that each individual is unique with a specific background, customs, beliefs and family values which have a great bearing on the outcome and acceptability of the treatment offered. A holistic treatment giving due consideration to the above factors would be optimum for all doctors and

their patients. Family planning healthcare workers are very well aware of how social lineage affects patients' decisions. Education has still not penetrated the deep-rooted customs of Indian society. Awareness is prevalent but utilization is deficient.

The recent deterioration of societal values towards women should be addressed at the grass roots level by involving boys at a very young age and imbibing in them values of gender equality and zero tolerance for discrimination and violence. However in a separate section the articles present a very optimistic picture of a progressive society in India where males are seen to be accepting roles of both bread-earners and care-givers. Men with higher 'Emotional Intelligence' have a greater role to play by their involvement not restricted to only contraception but extending to support females in the families, community, workplaces and in promotion of gender equity, equal expectations from the girl and boy child, women's empowerment and sharing psycho-social responsibilities. The articles on Men Care Project show that these men are torch-bearers of this change in the mindset of men and are slowly but definitely shaking off the patriarchal ideologies of the Indian society.

The articles highlight impact of mass media in shaping the thought process and forging a solid change in the deep-rooted customs and evils such as sex-selection abortion and early marriage. The articles on ideas about masculinity among men help the reader get an access to the unknown realms of the minds of men across socio-economic groups.

The book necessitates compulsory exploration of the very origins of varied behaviours. Male-centric ideas like going away to in-laws house by the bride, change of last name and her identity post-marriage, dowry, conduct of final rites by the boy should now be shunned by the very guardians of our society in order to ensure a sustained progress and survival of our rich heritage. However the reader is left wanting for an overall social picture in India today and its trend over the years.

The book serves as a guiding light for a bright future with equal status of both males and females in India.