

## Respectful Maternity Care

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In the last few decades, there has been a lot of change globally to make societies equitable and fair. The progress worldwide has revealed that gaps of human rights based approaches towards life and healthcare have been reduced. Dignity, respect, and autonomy are the principle human rights which govern healthcare in general and maternity care specifically. Maternity care received by women varies all over the world. In densely populated countries such as Pakistan, our high birthrate indicates just how vital this area of concern is. A respectful, dignified approach towards a woman in such an eventful period of her life, can lead to the enhanced feeling of being empowered; and ultimately enhance her feeling of wellbeing mentally and physically.

It is crucial for us, as healthcare providers, to ensure that we involve women presenting to us for maternity care, in a respectful and empathetic manner. Principles of beneficence and non-maleficence govern our practice. It is vital for us to make the woman realize, that she is not seen as a means of procreation or in layman term '*birthing machines*' but as an empowered individual. She needs to perceive that her decisions are fully supported by the healthcare providers in accordance to her own free will, without fearing discrimination on any grounds.

Unfortunately, working in pressured services, like Obstetrics and Gynaecology in an underdeveloped, densely populated country like Pakistan with very low resources in the healthcare system; especially in a public hospital make us lose sight of the individual when focusing on management and treatment. Issues

concerning disrespect and abuse are not categorized formally and there is no robust mechanism available for the patients to address this issue.

As healthcare providers, we need to take in account and develop tools, to categorize disrespect and abuse; so that retributive measures can be taken and an empathetic more dignified, and respectful approach be formed in dealing with patients who are in a vulnerable status, in such a condition, in our maternity cares at the hospitals.

Professional societies have a vital role in advocacy and providing a leadership role in this regard. World over many interventions exist in improving facility based and trained providers availability at childbirth but less attention is focused on compassionate and respectful quality of care. The national societies can fill these gaps in service provision by advocating structured respectful maternity care and sensitizing providers to this social and professional accountability.

### Further Readings

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