

Editorial:

LIFE SAVING ANAESTHESIA SKILLS AND ANAESTHESIA SERVICES IN INDIA:

In India, like in several developing countries, the anaesthesia services are far from satisfactory. The main reason among them is the critical shortage of qualified manpower, especially at Sub-district level. In the face of limited resources made available for Health care by the Government, and already stretched up demand for several disease control programmes, it is the development of anaesthesia services which are particularly vulnerable and are often a last priority.

The quality of anaesthesia services is definitely showing an upward trend in the last decade, thanks to the technological improvements and improved economic status of public at large. But it is probable that millions of people in underdeveloped states of our country do not have access to health care, that should be considered a basic human right; a safe child birth and pain relief during surgery. After all the anaesthesia services are considered as index of improved human civilization & culture. The basic problem identified by the Govt. of India in this regard under NRHM is the acute shortage of qualified Anaesthesiologists. - "Shortage of anaesthesists is perhaps the single most important cause of inadequacy of emergency care in Government Hospitals, particularly in rural areas". It further said "The actual operationalisation of FRU is suffering due to lack of specialist / trained manpower, particularly in the field of anaesthesia."

The maternal mortality in our country at present is identified at 450 and this can be further brought down to a great extent if anaesthesia & Resuscitation Services are strengthened at Sub-District level Hospitals, especially in socially and economically underdeveloped States. The maternal morbidity such as Vesico-vaginal fistula are not only a social stigma and but also the family life of women can be disturbed to any extent. The quantum of additional burden on the national exchequer in this regard has to be worked out.

The programme launched by Govt. of India under the banner "Life saving anaesthesia skills" is already in place. The peripheral Hospitals are strengthened with necessary resuscitation equipment and blood storage facilities. The required manpower are being trained at several medical college and District Hospitals for a period of 18 weeks and subsequently evaluated about the skills acquired. The identified teaching institutions are appropriately strengthened to impart a quality education. This medical manpower after the successful training are deployed at First Referral Units (FRU) to render services to needy mothers in labour – either for Resuscitation & transportation to higher center or for conduct of anaesthesia for Caesarian Section. The appropriate legal protection is provided to this Trained manpower for this particular purpose. But the question being asked is whether this time duration of 18 weeks is sufficient to train in such potentiality hazardous skill. Whether any modification is necessary to make this programme more effective and useful in bringing down maternal mortality and morbidity; Only future can decide about it.

Let us all aim for healthy India through Quality Anaesthesia services because "Health is wealth."