

## Obstetrics and Gynaecology education: An overview

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### ABSTRACT

In providing healthcare to people, the discipline of Obstetrics & Gynaecology has evolved gradually since ancient times. The field of Obstetrics began as 'Midwifery' which included the art and science of pregnancy and childbirth. Teaching-Learning sessions on female reproductive system disorders at a medical school encompass a comprehensive knowledge on theoretical aspects with emphasis on the clinical applications in providing appropriate care to women. The ultimate focus is for the undergraduate to work in the hospital ward, labour room, operating theater, out-patient clinics and also in the primary healthcare settings as an intern medical officer at the end of the degree programme. Diverse pedagogy used in the Obstetrics & Gynaecology education at Faculty of Health-Care Sciences, Eastern University, Sri Lanka include lectures, clinical clerkship, portfolio, antenatal clinic visits and research. This diverse teaching-learning activities are aimed ultimately to produce a competent personnel in the provision of standard reproductive healthcare.

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### Introduction

Reproductive Health is an essential component in Health care provision since it is very much connected with bringing about an offspring. The role of female in this process is immeasurable. At the same time her health and life is also in danger due to the adverse outcomes during pregnancy, child birth, and afterwards. Furthermore, reproductive tract morbidities including malignancy have adverse impact on the health and life of women.

The learnings for Obstetrics & Gynaecology begins in the secondary level when the students learn reproductive system and procreation in the school. At the Faculty of Health-Care Sciences, Eastern University, Sri Lanka, this continues with the basic human

sciences at the Department of Human Biology (Students' Handbook, Faculty of Health-Care Sciences, Eastern University, Sri Lanka). The learner is intended to develop a comprehensive understanding on the structural and functional differences of male and female reproductive system organs and the uniqueness of the integrated coordination of their function in the process of procreation.

The pathophysiological and clinical aspects of this discipline begin when the learner successfully completes Human Biology course of the MBBS and BSc Nursing programs. Teaching-Learning sessions on Female Reproductive system disorders encompasses a comprehensive knowledge with emphasis on the clinical applications in providing appropriate care to the female clientele.

### **Obstetrics & Gynaecology as distinct discipline in Healthcare:**

In providing the healthcare to people, the discipline of Obstetrics & Gynaecology has evolved gradually since ancient times. The field Obstetrics began as 'Midwifery' which included the Art and Science of pregnancy and childbirth. Its beginning dated back to evolution of human race on the face of the earth. The development of Obstetrics started possibly in the Indus valley Civilization about 5000 years ago (Salhan, 2007). Birthing stools were described in the Old Testament of The Holy Bible (Christian community Bible, 1990). Number of different techniques were practiced by birthing women in ancient civilizations. Traditional Midwives were part of the society, had the ability to handle childbirth (கருணாகரன் n.d.) and functioned on par with Native Physicians. Numerous development have taken place over the last five centuries towards the present practice of Obstetrics, and continuing to be evolving.

Similarly, cure for Gynaecological illnesses too were described. Midwives took care of the girls having attained menarche (செபஸ்தியான் 2009). Native Physicians and Ladies having accustomed to home remedies looked after menstrual problems. Religious beliefs and superstitions too have played in the management of the illnesses. One incidence of a cure for a woman suffering from heavy menstruation for twelve years and found no remedy with Physicians was described in the Holy Bible (Gospel of Luke 1990). Like in Obstetrics, numerous development including Gynaecology Surgical procedures have taken place for the last three centuries.

### **Obstetrics & Gynaecology in Modern Education:**

The evolution of Obstetrics & Gynaecology in modern medical education began in the nineteenth century. In the earlier days, it was customary for one person to hold a combined chair of Anatomy and Surgery; the discipline of Obstetrics & Gynaecology was included with Surgery. In the first part of nineteenth century, separation of this discipline from Surgery occurred gradually in the United States of

America. Gynaecology was recognized as a distinct discipline in 1813 (Rock n.d.). In 1929 the British College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists was established and subsequently granted the 'Royal' title in 1938 (RCOG website). In 1930 American Board of Obstetrics & Gynaecology was established (ACOG website); these moves made this discipline as a major specialty. In Sri Lanka, Ceylon Obstetrics and Gynaecological Association was established in 1953 as a forerunner to the establishment of (Ceylon) Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists in 1972 (SLCOG website).

The undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study are designed with the aim of producing competent professionals in this discipline as part of the Degree program. Moreover, courses for Nurses and Midwives too are developed and implemented in producing competent personnel in providing the required healthcare.

### **Learners' role in Obstetrics & Gynaecology**

The educational pedagogy for the Teaching-Learning of Obstetrics & Gynaecology is integrated and interwoven through basic human sciences up to Postgraduate specialization and sub-specialization. The undergraduate level focuses on making the learner a competent professional in delivering the healthcare at basic/internship level under supervision of a specialized team or with well-trained personnel. Thus the ultimate focus is on the learner to work in the hospital ward, labour room, operating theater, out-patient clinics and also in the Primary Healthcare settings.

Learners also engage in research activities as part of the study program. Although the research activities are carried out, coordinated by Department of Primary Health Care for Medical students and Supplementary Health Sciences for BSc Nursing students, of the Faculty of Health-Care Sciences, Eastern University, Sri Lanka, a number of topics are selected in the discipline of Obstetrics & Gynaecology with the involvement of the academic staff and specialists in many aspects. Startling research findings were shown through student projects; one such is the

overwhelming incidence of anaemia in pregnant women in Batticaloa District of over 38 % (Deshabandu et, al. 2024). Certain contributory factors noted include low level of intake of iron supplement given in the Antenatal clinics. Over half of the pregnant women (54%) avoided consuming the iron supplement; this fact itself contributed to the high incidence of anaemia among pregnant women.

Another noteworthy inclusion of teaching-learning strategy in this discipline is the inclusion of 'learning portfolio'. This has been introduced for the final year MBBS students. Portfolio contains the logbook designed by the learner/s, reflective learning and writing, peer group activities, creative work etc. Thereby, the course also focusses on bringing about the inherent talents of the learner.

As an option, learner in the final year MBBS program is given an opportunity to visit peripheral hospital antenatal clinic cum inward care. This too are looked positively as an additional learning experience.

## Conclusion

The undergraduate Teaching-learning activity in Obstetrics & Gynaecology has many facets through which the learner has to go through with the aim to produce a competent personnel in the provision of standard reproductive healthcare.

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