

**AWARENESS DAY**HEALTH

# Midwives to the fore

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**International Day of the Midwife encourages a vital discourse on an age-old life-saving occupation**



Globally, about 287,000 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, and 2.7 million babies die within the first month of being born— these are

numbers Hyderabad is trying to eliminate through education and access to midwifery services. On May 5, Hyderabad's leg of International Day of the Midwife will be celebrated.

Dr Evita Fernandez of Fernandez Hospital Hyderabad, shares her experiences, "We kept getting critically ill mothers from various parts of the city, very young mothers who were seriously ill because of pregnancy complications and some of these mothers we couldn't save. This was harrowing for me to see, and it motivated me to look into how we could prevent these deaths. The more I read, the more I realised the places that had cut down on these mortalities had invested in professional midwifery into the backbone of their healthcare system. And looking at India, I realised we don't have a recognised charter of professional midwifery."

On that note, Dr Evita piloted a programme to get into the midwifery way of thinking and training. She then observed that midwives essentially focus on uncomplicated cases that form 85% of the population; they are trained to recognise complications and to refer these anomalies to an obstetrician.

Therefore, they contribute to reducing maternal deaths. By having midwives look after uncomplicated low-risk mothers, doctors are able to dedicate more time and energy to the cases that require their specialist skillset.

And that's when Dr Evita had Inderjit Kaur, a consultant midwife at Barts Health at Royal Hospital in London, come in to show the city the ropes. Inderjit states it was important for her to work on Hyderabad's midwifery scheme and International Day of the Midwife comes at an ideal time, "There are many ways this is being celebrated around the world, and we would like to see as many mothers and babies as possible at the Hyderabad events, to showcase their importance and their role in the cause. Plus it's great to see the expectant mothers, babies and established mothers come together and discuss childbirth on a real level."

## **Born values**

The essence of International Day of the Midwife is to abolish the negative stigma that comes with the occupation, Dr Evita shares. “When people hear the word midwife, it’s not met with great feeling. But in professional midwifery, there’s a structured training for highly competent midwives. We are working to ensure mothers that they will be in the hands of an expert. It’s also a challenge for obstetricians to step back. We also want to build a confidence in this realm. In hospitals, there is such a distinct hierarchy; nurses are treated like second-class citizens. Nurses are capable of decision-making and critical thinking just as we are, so we want them to be able to be steadfast in their beliefs.”

International Day of the Midwife will be kicked off with a rally-style walk in KBR Park at 6:45am, where participants will meet at the main entrance.

At 5:30pm, there will be an open discussion between mothers, midwives and pregnant mothers on childbirth at Fernandez’s Stork Home Centre in Banjara Hills.

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