Anesthesia Residents Help Promote Labor and Delivery Safety in China

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China is the world’s most populous country. Its cesarean rate over 50% is also among the world’s highest. Before 2015, the country has followed a single-child policy for over four decades. Now that each family can have multiple children, there is a surge of vaginal births, many are from older women who have had a previous cesarean delivery.

The No Pain Labor and Delivery Global Health Initiative was launched in 2008 by a group of obstetric anesthesiologists from the United States, initially aiming at increasing epidural rates and avoiding unnecessary cesarean deliveries due to lack of labor analgesia. In hospitals chosen as worksite for the Initiative, epidural rates increase from less than 10% to over 50%, and cesarean delivery decreased by 15%. In response to the demographic change with older mothers with more complex medical and obstetric history going through trial of labor after a previous cesarean delivery, the Initiative is expanding its scope to promote labor and delivery safety and emergency preparedness.

Dr. Weike Tao of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center (UTSW) has been a key member of the Initiative since 2010. He has helped formulating guidelines and protocols to provide better and safer care to laboring women. He is also a key member bridging communications and facilitating academic exchange between US and Chinese obstetric anesthesiologists. Each year, Dr. Tao leads a team of obstetricians, anesthesiologists, nurses, and neonatal resuscitation staff to demonstrate a teamwork model in high-volume women’s hospitals with a particular emphasis on improving safety of the mother and baby.

In June 2016, two UTSW anesthesia residents, Amber Benhardt and Alexa Kaminski, joined Dr. Tao’s team to work in the Jiaxing Women and Children’s Hospital in Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province. They helped local physicians prepare a standardized history and physical exam form, secure essential resuscitation equipment and drugs, and learn the importance of 24/7 anesthesia coverage in the labor and delivery unit. They participated in the daily debriefing and attended lectures on evidence-based obstetric and anesthesia

Dr. Amber Benhardt and Dr. Alexa Kaminski were among the China-US obstetric anesthesia team in Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province
practice. Finally, they participated in the simulation of emergency cesarean delivery with the goal to arrive in the operating room in four minutes and achieve fetal delivery in five.

Participation of UTSW residents of the global health initiative was well received by team members and local physicians. It helped demonstrate the importance of teamwork and an ever-present anesthesia service in a busy labor and delivery unit. Working with board certified anesthesiologists was also a great opportunity for the residents to learn various experiences and get updated in some of the key concepts in obstetric anesthesia.

The Obstetric Anesthesia at UTSW continues its commitment to this global health initiative and involvement of residents and fellows in world health outreach and education.

For more information, please refer to the Initiative’s website (http://nopainld.itranspopmed.org). To learn about the Initiative and its impact, refer to the special article in Anesthesia and Analgesia:


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