



## FIGO reaffirms support: World Prematurity Day

(17 November 2014)

FIGO reaffirms its support for the highlighting of *World Prematurity Day* on 17 November 2014.

One of the main priority areas for FIGO in its efforts to promote women's health is maternal and newborn care. Prematurity constitutes a critical area of concern with regard to newborn, infant and child health.

\*The magnitude of the problem is such that 15 million pre-term births occur every year (the number is rising); 60 per cent of pre-term births occur in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia; and 75 per cent of deaths of premature babies could be prevented with feasible cost-effective care.

The consequences of prematurity include long-term growth impairment and substantial long-term morbidity such as cognitive, visual and learning impairments.

Strategies to prevent pre-term birth include: family planning, and increased empowerment of women; improved quality of care before, between and during pregnancy; prevention and screening/management of STIs; education and health promotion for girls and women; promotion of healthy nutrition, including micronutrient fortification; addressing life-style risks such as smoking and environmental risks such as indoor air pollution; and screening and management of pregnant women at highest risk of pre-term birth eg those with multiple pregnancies; diabetes; high blood pressure; and history of previous pre-term birth.

FIGO promotes high impact, cost-effective interventions to care effectively for premature babies, encouraging its Member Societies in 125 countries/territories to increase uptake - these include the administration of corticosteroids, Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) and Kangaroo Mother Care. This commitment is illustrated through FIGO's joint project with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) and the International Pediatric Association (IPA) - 'Improving the Quality of Maternal and Newborn Healthcare Services Through Accelerated Implementation of the Essential Interventions by the Healthcare Professionals' Associations' - in selected health facilities in Uganda and Indonesia.

Professor Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, FIGO President, said: 'FIGO is keen to highlight the value of collaborative action between obstetricians, midwives and paediatricians in managing pre-term birth.

'In addition, to bolster our work in this critically important area, a new FIGO Working Group on Pre-term Birth has been formed to examine the global trends and potential reductions through effective interventions in selected countries. The Group - kindly sponsored and chaired by March of Dimes (MOD), with whom we have a robust Memorandum of Understanding - will work closely with FIGO's existing Working Group on Best Practice on Maternal-Foetal Medicine in this regard. FIGO Member Societies will also play a part in facilitating access to the relevant information needed to complete the analysis.'

### **Sources/resources:**

- \*Born Too Soon: The Global Action Report on Preterm Birth - [www.who.int/pmnch/media/news/2012/preterm\\_birth\\_report/en/](http://www.who.int/pmnch/media/news/2012/preterm_birth_report/en/)
- Every Newborn Toolkit - [www.everynewborn.org/every-newborn-toolkit/](http://www.everynewborn.org/every-newborn-toolkit/)
- The European Foundation for the Care of Newborn Infants - [www.efcni.org/](http://www.efcni.org/)