



Press Release

Colombo Declaration Demands Increased Focus on Maternal Health to Deal with the Diabetes Onslaught in South Asia

Over 300 delegates from South Asia representing the South Asian Initiative for Diabetes in Pregnancy, today endorsed the Colombo Declaration demanding urgent action to address the link between maternal health and diabetes as a public health priority. They are attending the 1st Asia Pacific Congress on Diabetes, Hypertension & Metabolic Syndrome in Pregnancy in Colombo, Sri Lanka

The declaration resolves to address the suboptimal maternal health care and rising incidence of hyperglycemia in pregnancy in order to improve the health of the future generations of South Asians. The declaration states that focusing on hyperglycemia in pregnancy popularly referred to as gestational diabetes provides a unique opportunity to integrate services to improve mother and new born health and address prevention of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

South Asia reduced its maternal mortality ratio (MMR), from 550 in 1990 to 190 per 100,000 live births in 2013, a remarkable decline of 65%; however, maternal death a largely preventable tragedy, still continues to be high. With decline in direct maternal deaths because of targeted interventions, efforts to further reduce maternal mortality will have to be refocused on other indirect causes.

Hyperglycemia is one of the most common medical condition affecting women during pregnancy - an estimated 25% of live births in South Asia are impacted by it. These pregnancies are subject to increased risk of complications - hypertension, obstructed labor, postpartum hemorrhage, infections, still births, premature delivery, newborn deaths due to respiratory problems, hypoglycemia and birth injuries. South Asian women are considered to have the greatest vulnerability for GDM, yet routine testing of all pregnant women is not done.

Without preventive care almost half of the women with GDM develop type 2 diabetes and significant proportions develop premature cardiovascular disease within 10 years of childbirth. Children born to women with GDM are also at very high risk of obesity, early onset type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, whereby, hyperglycemia in pregnancy perpetuates the risk of diabetes into the next generation.

Diabetes mellitus which affects over 85 million people in South Asia is matter of grave concern because the projections show that by 2040 these numbers will exceed 150 million, hyperglycemia in pregnancy may contribute substantially to this rise.

"The rising incidence of hyperglycemia in pregnancy with its propensity to drive the future burden of diabetes in women and in the next generation of our children is very disturbing and the International Diabetes Federation supports all efforts to create awareness and build capacity to address it" says Prof S Sadikot, President of the International diabetes Federation.

Participants pledged to support efforts to

- address the link between maternal health and diabetes as a public health priority
- increase public awareness about hyperglycemia in pregnancy and its impact on maternal and child health to encourage preconception counselling, antenatal care and post-natal follow up
- accelerate the implementation of the FIGO GDM initiative in South Asia ([http://www.ijgo.org/issue/S0020-7292\(15\)X0015-4](http://www.ijgo.org/issue/S0020-7292(15)X0015-4))
- ensure all pregnant women attending health facilities are tested for hyperglycemia using a single-step procedure
- ensure post-partum follow up and engagement of the high risk mother child pair post-GDM pregnancy
- develop, support and carry out research for discovery of new tools, treatments and procedures to improve point of care diagnostics, monitoring and management of HIP and the ability to engage, counsel and track the mother-child pair over the long term keeping in mind the health care delivery structures of South Asia.
- encourage task shifting and role based training to build capacity for prevention, early diagnosis, and treatment
- promote and celebrate a national GDM Awareness Day as an instrument to bring public attention and raise awareness of the problem

Explaining the need for the Colombo Declaration Prof V Seshiah, Distinguished Professor, The Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University and the Founder Chairman of the Diabetes in Pregnancy Study Group India (DIPSI) and the force behind the South Asia Initiative on Diabetes in Pregnancy (SAIDIP) says – " We share similar genetics, lifestyles and socio economic development. Our health systems more or less face similar problems of low resources and limited funding. It is therefore necessary that we create common aspirations, and learn from each other. Our hope is that this declaration will inspire all stakeholders to understand the relevance of diabetes to maternal health and to the future health of nations in South Asia"

His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Hon Dr. Rajitha Senarathne, Minister of Health & Indigenous Medicine addressed the participants at the opening ceremony of the conference on 8th Sept 2016 and highlighted Sri Lanka's efforts to tackle NCDs and improve maternal health. Sri Lanka's maternal mortality rate in 2013 was 29 compared to 190 per 100,000 live births for South Asia Region.

The conference, supported by the Ministry of Health Sri Lanka, the World Health Organization (Sri Lanka Country Office) and the World Diabetes Foundation, featured talks from renowned international and regional experts including the presidents of The International Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology (FIGO), International Diabetes Federation (IDF), and Chairman World Diabetes Foundation (WDF).

Colombo Sri Lanka

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About SAIDIP

The South Asia Initiative on Diabetes in Pregnancy is an informal network of health care professionals working in the area of diabetes in pregnancy in the South Asia Region. It aims to further collaborative research, capacity building and share experiences and best practices to tackle diabetes during pregnancy and the health challenge it poses for maternal and new born health, the future burden of Diabetes and CVD and to women's health overall.