

The national partogram - can we do better ?

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Partogram graphically represents the important events in labour and facilitates the care giver in decision making should there be any deviation from normality. It is a more objective way of presenting the labour events although the key features in the partogram are predominantly subjectively assessed. The partogram serves a simple and inexpensive tool to monitor labour in a cost-effective way.

Although routine use of the partogram as part of standard labour management is not recommended, it is acknowledged that they are useful in settings with poorer access to healthcare resources. Typical of such a setting is that each woman is not continuously monitored and the staff caters to a group of labouring women concurrently. The quality indicators of maternity care in Sri Lanka is high compared to most of the other South East Asian countries. But until such time the maternity standards in Sri Lanka are further elevated to ensure that each woman has the best possible outcome in par with the standards in more developed countries, the partogram remains an integral part of labour management in most of our service settings.

Since the introduction of the national partogram after adopting it for Sri Lanka for nearly two decades, there had not been a national audit of its use or its impact on the maternal and neonatal morbidity mortality. Hence there is a need to have a re-look at its implementation, impact on the quality of care and the staff attitudes in order to use it more rationally and to espouse strategies to enhance awareness and to improvement of its design.