

Research is the key to saving lives, conference hears

Posted on Thursday 14th November 2013

Leading academics in the field of maternal health have called on researchers to do more to help save the lives of mothers and babies around the world following a major conference at the University of Birmingham.

Professor Arri Coomarasamy (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/cem/RGD/Coomarasamy-Arri.aspx>), Professor of Gynaecology at the University of Birmingham and a trustee of Ammalife, an international charity with a mission to find solutions to maternal health problems through practical research and sustainable projects in the developing world, urged colleagues to use their knowledge and expertise to contribute to the vibrancy of research into women's health worldwide.

The GLOW (Global Women's Research Society) Conference saw more than 140 women's and newborn health specialists join forces to make a difference in saving mothers' and babies' lives, especially in low and middle income countries.

Findings presented to the conference included the results from the largest trial yet into the advantages of carbetocin versus oxytocin to prevent post partum haemorrhage – the leading cause of death during childbirth worldwide.

Birmingham researcher Ioannis Gallos, along with research partners in Mexico and Prof Coomarasamy, found that the drug carbetocin resulted in far fewer post partum haemorrhages than when oxytocin was used (18.4% compared to 25.8%) for pregnant women at risk of the condition, in a hospital in Mexico.

The findings are dramatic for maternal health in developing countries because of the innate benefits of carbetocin compared to oxytocin. It has a longer half life – the time it takes for a drug to lose one half of its pharmacological effect, meaning it works longer in the mother, and crucially, it is more heat stable than oxytocin, which is of vital importance in developing countries, where drugs may not be able to be stored in optimum conditions.

Professor Coomarasamy, said that findings such as these would make a dramatic impact to improving maternal health worldwide, and help meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals, including Improving Maternal Health, which aims to reduce maternal mortality by three quarters.

He said: "Using research to find what works and what doesn't is a fundamental need, as it allows everyone to make wise decisions about where to invest to have the maximum benefit. I urge everyone to consider how they can contribute."

Notes to editors

Professor Coomarasamy is available for interview. Please contact **Kara Bradley** (<mailto:k.j.bradley@bham.ac.uk>) in the University press office to arrange or for more information, on +44 (0)121 414 5134.

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