Reducing Litigation Risks in Obstetrics and Gynaecology

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"It is always good to remember that if you step into a muddy pond and wash your feet thoroughly, the smell of the mud will still linger on."
Justice Dato' (Dr) R. K.Nathan

This quotable quote is from a chapter written by a well-known medico-legal personality in the above book. Doctors will always dread ending up in court as a defendant. The odds are increasing year by year that a doctor will face this unenviable position. "Reducing Litigation Risks In Obstetrics and Gynaecology" is a 45-page handbook providing valuable tips on how to avoid this predicament to the practicing obstetrician and gynaecologist as well as those in training to be one. The handbook is written by Prof MacDonald and Dr Kumarasamy who are academic staff from the Penang Medical College.

The authors bring their medico-legal experience to bear in penning their various sections. The handbook opens with a short section on communication. It is suggested that if the risk or complication of a procedure is greater than one per cent, the patient should be told about it. The reader is also informed that courts have suggested that patients have the right to know about all possible complications-however rare. This is invaluable advice to the Malaysian doctor who often decides for the patient what should be told.

The sections are then divided into obstetrics and gynaecology. There is a distinct difference in the way these two sections have been written in the form of content although the writing style is similar. The obstetrics section provides less technical details but is heavy on preventive advice. The gynaecology section provides a good balance of both.

There is also a section on the pitfalls facing the clinician who embarks on the more recent techniques of laparoscopic and hysteroscopic procedures. This is commendable.

The authors provide some very practical and valuable advice when a gynaecologist experiences some unexpected injuries during surgery. The junior doctor would find the advice on the ways of determining bladder injuries very useful. "The limits of the bladder can be defined by inflating the bladder with methylene blue in saline." The flat tire test is introduced for locating very small vesicovaginal fistulae. "The bladder is filled with carbon dioxide, the vagina with water and the opening of the fistula is identified from the location of rising bubbles." There is also advice about recognizing bowel injury. The authors recommend that if there is concern about rectal damage, the pelvis can be filled with water. Subsequent milking of the colon towards the rectum may reveal gas bubbles indicating leakage. It is rare to find such valuable snippets of information in one place. This handbook would be useful even for those who feel they are in no need of medico-legal advice.
Justice Dato' (Dr) R. K. Nathan has written a chapter on "Avoiding litigation in O&G". This is a "must-read" for doctors of all disciplines. He suggests that doctors should never underestimate the opponent's Counsel. "He might not be a specialist, in your field but he will be just as prepared. Doctors be warned!

The writing style is clear and readable. The authors could improve on this by providing summaries of useful tips and practice points through out the text. Illustrations or cartoons could have also helped to impart the message better. The handbook could have been improved by providing local case scenarios and data in relation to medico-legal claims. The authors allude to this in the acknowledgement but I do not recognize it in the text. Perhaps some reference to landmark judgements in the Malaysian context would help doctors gauge the present medico-legal climate better.

This handbook is a very commendable effort. Professional bodies in O&G and medical defence societies should distribute this handbook widely to all doctors practicing in O&G. I would definitely make it compulsory reading for all trainees in O&G.

Reviewed by: J Ravindran, FRCOG
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The Obstetrics and Gynaecology curriculum is structured with four overarching professional identities, which are divided into generic and specialty-specific areas. The professional identities (PI) are supported by 14 high-level learning outcomes, known as Capabilities in Practice (CiP). Each CiP is supported by several key skills and subsequent descriptors, which are expected to be demonstrated by the applicant. The PIs and respective CiPs are outlined below and the key skills for each of these are outlined in this guide. Further details of the descriptors can be found in the Obstetrics and Gy... Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. This book is well written and well produced...it should be available in both obstetric and neonatal units. Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology. The chapter on litigation related to contraception and sterilisation would benefit all family planning doctors and the book could also be usefully read by managers and midwives. Yorkshire Medicine. The book is amply referenced and there are numerous tables and illustrations. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine. Synopsis. I found this book very concise and easy to navigate. It epitomizes the knowledge required to reduce complaints and litigation by sign posting the issues to consider in a day-to-day duties as obstetrician and gynaecologist. I highly recommend this book. Read more. The National Clinical Programme for Obstetrics and Gynaecology was established in 2010 as a joint initiative between HSE Clinical Strategy and Programmes Division and the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. The aim of the programme is to improve choices in women's healthcare. Professor Michael Turner of the UCD Centre for Human Reproduction at the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital leads the programme. The programme publishes national clinical guidelines that provide clear guidance on managing common and serious conditions in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. National clini
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In practical paperback format, each 200-page topic-based issue of Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics & Gynaecology will provide a comprehensive review of current clinical practice and thinking within the specialties of obstetrics and gynaecology. All chapters are commissioned and written by an international team of practising clinicians with the Guest Editors for each issue drawn from a pool of renowned experts and opinion leaders. Reference is made to:

- The latest original research
- Cochrane Reviews
- Audits and confidential enquiries
- National and international conferences

Semantic Scholar extracted view of "Reducing risk in obstetrics." by James Owen Drife.