

## Fecal incontinence after vaginal delivery

The leading article on faecal incontinence after vaginal delivery (1) causes much concern. It is worthwhile highlighting some other related issues. Obviously this kind of problem causes much distress and impairs quality of life of mothers. They can give rise to psychological distress and anxiety and also anticipatory anxiety and emotional difficulties during subsequent pregnancies, unless dealt with effectively.

It has been demonstrated that the nature of the early mother-child interaction and healthy relationship are important in the formation of a secure attachment. The pattern of emotional communication between parent and child is very important. It can influence the child's future relationships as well. Maternal distress contributes to the development of psychological problems in children. It has also been shown that maternal mental illness is related to psychological difficulties in childhood. Studies done in the west based on clinic and general populations show important associations between mental disorder in the parents and psychiatric problems in children (2).

A recent longitudinal study of parents and children has demonstrated that there could be a direct effect of maternal anxiety and depression on foetal brain development and a child's behavioural development (3). Another study has indicated that the level of maternal cortisol can be correlated with foetal cortisol levels (4). It has been

shown also that anxiety level of mothers during pregnancy can be associated with increased uterine artery resistance (5).

Hence it is important to identify these mothers with incontinence early and deal with them effectively (including the psychological aspects), to improve the mother-child interaction so as to facilitate development of a healthy attachment and to minimise the emotional difficulties in mothers and children. It will also help to reduce the antenatal anxiety and distress during subsequent pregnancies.

### References

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