

Abstract

In humans as well as in other animal species, pain is one of the primary components of the normal process of child birth. Since ancient times however, efforts have been made to relieve or reduce the severity of pain in labour with the hope of making the birthing process, not only rewarding in the end, but also pleasant and enjoyable throughout.

Persons in close proximity to the Victoria Jubilee Hospital have often described the sounds radiating from its environs as that reminiscent of a prison of war camp that does not obey the Geneva Convention of not torturing its inmates. With the present increase in number of methods of pain relief, this study was undertaken to determine the attitude of the doctors and nurses who take care of the patients at the Victoria Jubilee Hospital with respect to analgesia in labour; and, their knowledge of the available methods of pain relief.

A questionnaire was designed and given to all available obstetricians and midwives at the Victoria Jubilee Hospital. A total of sixty doctors and nurses took part in the study .

From the analysis of the questionnaire it was found that 88% thought that labour was naturally a painful process with 80 % feeling that provision of analgesia was very important.

No one thought the present level of analgesia administered to labouring patients was excellent and 62 % thought it was inadequate and that establishing a pain relief service at the Victoria Jubilee Hospital was a long over due occurrence, with 86% thinking it would not be a waste of time and money.

In assessing the knowledge of methods of providing pain relief, it was found that 56% thought an epidural was the most effective method and 63% thought epidurals were the most expensive method. Only 20% thought it would be acceptable to their patients.

It was concluded that it is important to improve the level of analgesia provided to labouring patients at the Victoria Jubilee Hospital, but the knowledge of the staff, of the available methods, needs to be improved. The introduction of new analgesic methods would be costly both in respect to staffing and equipment, but the benefits to be derived from improved patient care should be worth it. There was also the need for further research to determine patient knowledge of pain relief in labour and a drive to educate them both with respect to the birthing process and to pain relief.