

My Childbirth Experiences and Quack Medical Services

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by MabelA Friday, August 31, 2018 - 16:11 comments

Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! It's not yet time to doze ...!

This was exactly how the birth attendants were shouting, as I struggled to push down between contractions. The process of childbirth can be easy for one woman and can be difficult for another. The distress experienced by laboring women varies widely. This is often influenced by fear and anxiety, pain, mobility during labour and support received during labour.

My experience of labour was smooth for my first baby and rough for my second delivery. It was however quite easy for the last because of the involvement of quality medical services. Childbirth is awesome and can be a beautiful experience despite

the scary and difficult moments that some women might have. As a teen, I was told pain in contractions is similar to the feeling of very strong menstrual cramps which I experienced for a long time before I got married. As a result I was able to cope with my first childbirth experience. But I never knew the experience could be rocky when you are unfortunate to involve the services of quack medical personnel.

For my first baby, the pregnancy period was an easy one except for the first four months when my body was faced with the challenges of coping with pregnancy hormones. I had so much energy after the first four months and this continued until my due date.

Approaching my due date, I moved to my mother's place as it was my first experience. On the day, I saw signs of onset of labour referred to as the 'show' at about midnight. This signaled labour was imminent. However it was impossible to know at this stage how long it would last as this could be a few hours, days or less commonly a week or more. But mine was entirely different. I couldn't sleep that night after the 'show' as I was too eager to see my little me. My mother didn't sleep as well. I had a warm bath and sat on a chair gazing in anticipation at the clock. By 4:00am that early morning, I had a sudden gush of fluid as my waters broke from my cervix, another sign of labour. So my mother and I quickly left for the government hospital where I registered.

At the hospital, I was immediately taken to the labour room for a checkup. The scene I met there was pathetic and irritating. I saw several women who were in active labour, some were on the few beds available while others were on the floor with just two birth attendants. An elderly nurse came and shabbily asked one woman out of the bed for me to be examined. That is the poor state of most government hospitals in Delta state, Nigeria. One good thing about the hospital is the presence of trained doctors and experts in different fields. Another plus is the free medical services given to all pregnant women and their babies. But the environment is poorly equipped and certainly inadequate for childbirth. Patients attend perhaps due to cost reasons although there is access to specialists in various fields.

It is important to know who is attending to you because your dear life and that of your baby may be at risk. If they fail to provide an answer or become mad at you, run for your life...

I was told to go back home after the checkup as according to the midwives, labour had not started. I however understood there was no space for me to stay hence I was told to go until active labour began. Considering I was losing more amniotic fluid, I asked if my baby and I would be safe when the fluid got exhausted. None of them replied me instead they took me to the maternity ward and believe me, the ward was not better. I could not find any space to sit nor lie down. Some of the beds were shared by two women, while others lay on the floor with mats. Things were worse for women because, they got little support or none from caregivers. As a matter of fact, you hope not to have to be cared for by unsympathetic or callous and sometimes aggressive staff. The quality of staff-patient relationship was also poor. These environments and negative attitude of birth attendants can have tremendous effects on the distress levels of women during childbirth.

Due to these problems, we left and my mother took me to a private hospital where I was immediately admitted after an assessment and tests. To hasten the onset of labour, I was induced and not allowed to move about to avoid further loss of the amniotic fluid. Light contractions started by 1:00pm. Three hours later, the contractions progressed to a more painful one but I could still tolerate it owing to the experience of painful menstrual cramps I had before. By 8:00pm, the labour pains became intense and I had the urge to push down.

I felt very weak after the first push, weak to the extent that I started dozing off between contractions. The attendants distracted me from dozing shouting it was not time to doze. With each uterine contraction, I took in a deep breath and pushed down with no success. At 10:45pm, I decided to add a further expulsive effort. I lifted my head and clasped my legs with each hand, pulling them up to my abdomen and gave a better push. My beautiful baby girl slipped out to lie between my legs to my great relief.

I saw the wondrous little me and thought, the pain, discomfort and sweats were worth it. I felt like a super hero that minute because I did something unique and wonderful.

Two years later, I was willing to have another baby. I got pregnant again and registered with a private hospital in another city. We had, by this time, moved to Lagos. I made enquiries about the hospital from people, but I did not inquire about their field of specialization.

I went to the hospital myself when it was time for me to give birth. I had more painful contractions that lasted for 7 hours before I got the urge to bear down. As I was working hard at this, it felt like my perineum would tear extensively, so the doctor made a cut (episiotomy) with a new razor blade and without my notice. My baby boy came out after the cut and the placenta was expelled. I felt more pain as the doctor stitched the cut without any pain killer. I groaned and begged him to administer pain killer but he ignored me. I felt I won't survive it because I passed out immediately after the stitching. I had goose bumps all over my body by the time I was resuscitated. It was a feeling I cannot fully express but the fact is, that is what most women go through in the hands of non-experts or indeed quacks. A quack is a person who pretends to have medical skills, knowledge or qualifications he or she doesn't possess. Some doctors with specific skills who do not stick to their field of specialization may indeed practice dangerously. I guess doctors may feel insulted if they are compared to a quack.

Recently, my neighbor was due to deliver and was told by her doctor to get ready for a caesarian delivery because of the enormous size of the baby. "That doctor must be looking for an opportunity to get more money from you" a friend told her. She decided to visit another hospital where she delivered her baby normally and to the amazement of everybody, the baby was 2.8 kg against the 5 kg she was initially told. Because of money, these quacks can go an extra mile to exploit their victims.

I had my last baby recently in 2018. I was in a state of dilemma for a long time before I finally registered with one 'Divine Blessing Hospital' here in Lagos, Nigeria. In fact, it took about 5 months plus into my pregnancy before I registered. To be on a safer side, I confided in family friend in the medical field. He advised that I confirmed from the doctor what his specialty was and where he qualified. I did, but the doctor declined providing an answer, instead, he got angry and told me to go to another hospital for delivery. A truly trained doctor should be proud to answer such question my friend advised. It would appear they did not want their practice to come under scrutiny or be exposed.

I got in contact with a specialist (obstetrician) through our family friend and successfully had my baby in his clinic. I saw the difference between the services of a quack and a specialist. It was glaring. The attention and monitoring of the progress of labour was reassuring and made it easier to cope with the contractions and the final stages of the delivery. It was remarkable.

Consequently, I would advise pregnant women to ask these questions anytime they walk into any hospital. "Are you a trained doctor or nurse and where did you train?" It is important to know who is attending to you because your dear life and that of your baby may be at risk. If they fail to provide an answer or become mad at you, run for your life, because a trained specialist should be proud to answer your questions. Its better they get mad at you so you do not become a victim.

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