

Obstetric Anaesthesia: innovations in peripartum care

The first Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths in England and Wales was published almost 70 years ago. The following half a decade has seen an enormous evolution in the way Obstetric Anaesthesia is practiced, with significant improvements in maternal morbidity and mortality. The innovation, tenacity and flexibility of Obstetric Anaesthesia was further highlighted during the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

In this Special Issue on Obstetric Anaesthesia we will cover important developments in the field and give insight into the future of this speciality. There is an exciting expansion of Point of Care Ultrasound (POCUS) in the peri-partum period. Analgesic techniques during labour are expanding, with the more widespread use of Remifentanyl and midwife empowered analgesic regimes.

In addition to routine obstetric care, we are starting to manage women with complex medical conditions. This has mandated anaesthetists modify their anaesthetic techniques when guiding these women through their labour. As we gain more experience managing complex parturients through their labour and post-labour periods, we are continually pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

As technology advances, there are some exciting developments in the labour ward. The success of Cell Salvage has reduced homologous blood transfusions. As machine learning improves with larger data sets, we are developing greater insights into the physiological effects of anaesthesia in parturients.

In this issue we aim to review the latest innovations in Obstetric Anaesthesia. We will highlight recent changes to practice and what will be expected in the future. Exciting developments in technology (such as POCUS and new modes of analgesia) will be reviewed. Finally, we will look at what the future of Obstetric Anaesthesia holds, and how we can achieve it.

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