



Review Article on Overview of Role of Birth Companion in Labour Room.

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ABSTRACT

Bringing a new life into the world is one of the most profound experiences a person can go through, but it is not something that has to be done alone. In fact, research has shown that having a birth companion, whether it's a partner, friend or professional doula can have a significant impact on the birthing experience. From reducing the need for pain medication to decreasing the length of labour, birth companions provide vital support and comfort to both the birthing person and their baby. In this article, we will explore the benefits of having a birth companion, the different types of companions available, barriers to allow birth companion and how to become an effective birth companion.

Keywords: Birth Companion, Labour room, Birthing experience, Barriers, Professional Doula

1. Introduction

Birth Companion is an individual who has been selected by mother's during pregnancy in order to get continuous physical and emotional support throughout the labour process. WHO highly recommends the presence of Birth Companion in labor room to enhance the respectful Maternity Care.

2. 1 Why the Birth Companion is one of the key components of Respectful Maternity Care?

Over the past few decades, the number of Institutional deliveries has been increased. Shortage of health care workers endangers the implementation of RMC & impedes the goal attainment. Hence the most of the countries facilitates the process of Birth Companion as a low cost intervention to meet the demands of laboring mother & safeguard them from disrespects and mistreatment.

2.2 Who can be a Birth Companion?

All expectant mothers have the right to choose anyone of the following person as a Birth Companion. But according to the Institutional policies, it may vary:

- From the women's family & social network such as female friends or relatives (they should have childbirth experience)
- Spouse can be allowed as a birth companion if adequate infrastructure facilities are available to ensure the privacy of others.
- Community member (Health worker or TBA)
- A Doula (A women who has specially trained in labor support but should not be in the part of health care facility's professional staff).

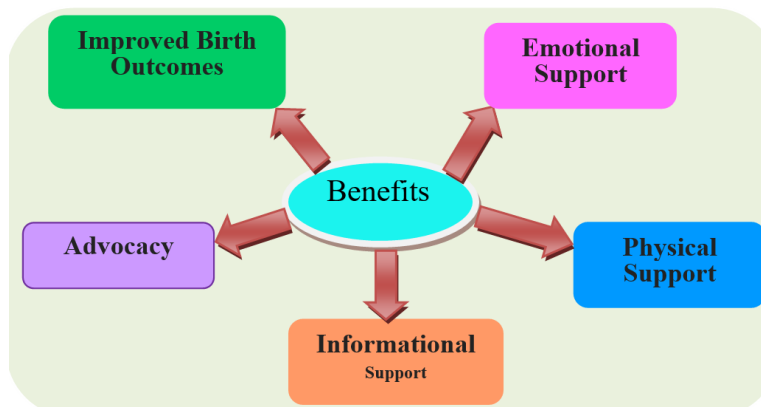
2.3 Pre requisites to become a Birth Companion.

- The birth companion has to be a female family member/relative/friend who has experienced the process of labor and delivery.
- Spouse can be allowed if proper infrastructure is available where the privacy protocols are followed.
- She should not be suffering from any communicable diseases and preferably in good health.
- She should be wearing clean clothes and willing to follow the instructions given by the labor room team.
- She should not interfere with the work of the hospital staff and treatment procedures.
- She should not attend to other women problems in the labor room or elsewhere.

- The birth companion should be willing to stay throughout the process of labor.
- She should be willing to initiate the breastfeeding and take care of the baby & mother in the immediate postpartum period.

2.4 Benefits of birth companion:

There are several benefits to have a birth companion during childbirth. Here are some of the most significant benefits:



- ☉ **Emotional Support:** Giving birth can be a stressful and overwhelming experience. A birth companion provides continuous emotional support to the mother throughout the entire process, which can help reduce stress, anxiety, and fear. Emotional support may include listening, encouraging, and offering comfort through touch or positive affirmations.
- ☉ **Physical Support:** Birth companions provide physical support during labor and delivery by suggesting and demonstrating various coping mechanisms and techniques. This may include massage, breathing exercises, and different laboring positions that can help alleviate discomfort, increase relaxation and facilitate an easier delivery.
- ☉ **Informational Support:** Birth companions provide the mother and her partner with information about what to expect during labor and delivery, as well as explaining the various options available for medical interventions, pain management, and childbirth. This information helps the mother make informed decisions and feel empowered during her childbirth experience.
- ☉ **Advocacy:** Birth companions work with the medical staff to ensure that the mother's birth plan and wishes are respected and supported. They help facilitate communication between the mother and medical staff, and they can act as an advocate for the mother's needs and preferences.
- ☉ **Improved Birth Outcomes:** Studies have shown that having a birth companion during childbirth is associated with a lower likelihood of medical interventions such as cesarean sections and the use of pain medication. Women who have a birth companion also report higher levels of satisfaction with their childbirth experience and have improved infant bonding and breastfeeding outcomes..
- ☉ **Postpartum Support:** A birth companion may continue to provide support after childbirth, assisting with breastfeeding, newborn care, and emotional adjustment. They can offer resources and referrals to help the new parents navigate the postpartum period.

2.5 Obstacles to implement the birth companion presence:

- Absence of institutional policies pertaining to birth companion.
- Poor infrastructure limits privacy.
- Overcrowding in the labor room hinders the hygienic standards.
- Narrow insight of health care workers about the benefit of birth companion.
- Cost of additional support people (doula)
- Possibility to employ traditional approaches by companions.
- Limited availability of Trained Birth Attendants.
- Cultural or societal stigma surrounding the use of birth companion.

2.6 How to become an effective Birth companion:

In the labor room, a birth companion can provide support to the birthing person in a variety of ways, including:

- Do the activities that make the mothers comfortable like massage, counter pressure, breathing techniques and touch to ease her pain.
- Help the birthing person to feel supported and empowered.
- Show empathy and understand the mother's wishes.
- Ensure the birthing person's wishes, preferences & communicate the birth plan to the health care providers.
- Maintain a positive outlook throughout the labour process.
- Helps to create a soothing or nurturing atmosphere in the birthing process.
- Helps to clarify any queries or concerns the birthing person may have & support them in expressing their needs effectively.
- Do speak gently. Give reassurance at all time & listen to their concerns actively..
- Offer adequate oral fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Be confident & help the mother in decision making.
- Motivate and encourage the mother by giving positive words.
- Act as an advocate for mothers preferences
- Help her to change positions & to move around. Support the mother to adapt comfortable position during childbirth.
- Maintain confidentiality & respect the birthing mother privacy at all times.
- Be flexible to understand and adapt the emergency situations.
- Be aware of mother's rights.
- Initiate breastfeeding as early as possible.
- Promote Mother-New born bonding.
- Help the mother in emotional adjustment during post partum period.

2.7 Steps to be avoided by birth companion:

While a birth companion plays a crucial role in providing support during labour, there are certain activities they should refrain from doing. These include:

- Don't be panic.
- Don't interfere in health care activities.
- Don't perform any medical procedures or provide clinical care.
- Don't ask for caesarean section or instrumental deliveries unless the mother needs.
- Don't make decisions on behalf of birthing person. The final decisions should be made by birthing persons themselves.
- Don't engage in any physical contact or activities that the birthing person is uncomfortable.
- Don't hesitate to be in labor room for longer time.
- Don't attend the nearby laboring mothers.
- Don't be curious to know about other laboring mother's status.
- Don't yell at any time.
- Don't take over the role of healthcare workers.
- Don't provide medical advice or offer diagnosis to the health care providers.
- Don't judge or criticize the choices made by the birthing person.
- Don't misuse mobile phones.

3. Conclusions

The labour companion will be given a clear understanding of their role & their consent will be sought before proceeding. The presence of birth companion has been linked to higher levels of maternal satisfaction, increased co-operation & improved pain tolerance during labour. Many countries are not having

policies related to birth companion & most of the health care provisions are in need of competent infrastructure to facilitate the process of birth companion. Raising awareness, ensuring adequate framework, arranging training sessions & formulate policies are some of the modalities to be followed for birth companion practice enhancement. Health care professionals must make use of this practice for granting comfortable childbirth experience to each labouring mothers.

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