

Cesarean delivery on maternal request: an overview in China

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In recent years, the cesarean section rate has been high. Because of the lack of research on cesarean section without medical indication, the surgery is facing huge risks. To compensate for the lack of domestic-related research, and help clinicians to weigh the pros and cons of cesarean section, the paper reviews the reasons for cesarean delivery on maternal request (CDMR) and the advantages and disadvantages of CDMR so as to put forward constructive advice.

Key words: cesarean delivery on maternal request (CDMR); risks; child; puerperal

With the progress and maturity in medical technology and cesarean section (CS) skills, CS rate is ever-increasing around the world^[1-4]. As a result, the World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that CS rate should not exceed 15%^[5]. According to the WHO global survey on Maternal and Perinatal Health (2007–2008), the result shows that the CS rate of China is the highest among all the countries involved in this investigation, so is the rate of cesarean delivery on maternal request (CDMR), which is 20 to 50 times, or even 100 times higher than other countries^[1]. CDMR is defined as a primary cesarean delivery for a full-term, singleton pregnancy on maternal request in the absence of any medical indications. Due to the lack of enough scientific evidence, it's difficult to thoroughly evaluate the overall risks and benefits of CDMR. Therefore any decision to perform a CDMR should be carefully individualized and consistent with ethical principles, especially when taking the scarce healthcare resources in China into account.

Reasons for CDMR

Maternal causes

Fear of pain

Compared with cesarean delivery, spontaneous delivery means longer labor and stronger pain caused by uterine contractions. To evade suffering from the pain of spontaneous delivery,

most women would rather choose cesarean delivery.

Improper understandings of CDMR

Domestic and international researches in this respect find that most foreign women think natural labor is relatively safer and CDMR isn't worth recommendation^[2,3] despite the fact that most Chinese women prefer to choose cesarean delivery for the following reasons: firstly, the cesarean delivery is safer; secondly, vaginal delivery will cause sexual dysfunction which impose a long-term impact on their future life; thirdly, CS means flexible time of childbirth which will bring good luck to the child; fourthly, vaginal delivery can produce adverse effects on the fetus intelligence^[4-9].

Doctors' causes

Doctors seem to play a relatively less significant role in CDMR compared with that in other types of cesarean delivery. However, researches confirm that when it comes to clinical practice, quite a number of doctors tend to choose CDMR considering such synthetic factors as the safety of childbirth and maternal requirements^[10,11].

The advantages and disadvantages of CDMR

Advantages

Saving maternal and child's lives in emergency

CS could save maternal and child's life when vaginal delivery is absolutely impossible for some reasons, which is an additional delivery method in extreme case.

Avoiding the contractions pain during childbirth

If cesarean delivery is operated before the contractions, women can avoid the pain of uterus contraction. This would help women to reduce the fear of deliver a baby^[12].

First aid and treatment at the same time

If other diseases are found in the abdominal cavity such as merger ovarian cyst and subserous hysteromyoma, they can be treated during CS. When the uterus is inappropriate to retain for the case of severe infection, incomplete uterine rupture, multiple uterine fibroids, etc., the uterus can be removed simultaneously. Tubal ligation is also convenient during the operation.

Reducing complications

Safety of CS has gradually improved. Clinicians timely terminate the pregnant rape when pregnancy complications happen, which greatly reduces the impact of comorbidities and complications for the mother and child^[13].

Disadvantages

The maternal aspects

Recent complications

1) Postpartum hemorrhage. The main causes of postpartum hemorrhage are uterine

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