

REPORT OF VISIT TO GEORGIA

Jos van Roosmalen, Thomas van den Akker, Jelle Stekelenburg
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Introduction

Initiated through personal communication between professor Tengiz Asatiani and Jelle Stekelenburg concerning the rising caesarean section percentage in Georgia and the possibilities to organise a caesarean section indication audit the opportunity rose to visit Georgia through a programme funded by the Georgian Ministry of Education. Foreign professors were invited to travel to Georgia to give lectures to Georgian medical students from Tbilisi Medical State University. My application was accepted and Van Roosmalen and Van den Akker decided to join me.



Fig.1 Tbilisi State Medical University

Programme

Preparations were made to deliver 3 lectures on 3 consecutive days to 3rd and 4th grade medical students. However, due to political unrest the students were not around (protesting in the streets of Tbilisi) and the programme needed to be adapted. Instead of medical students our audience consisted of residents Obs&Gyn, which was even better for us.

With a limited number of residents participatory education methods could be used and interactive teaching progressively succeeded into working together on thinking about when and how to use obstetric interventions. The human rights perspective was once and again put emphasis on. On the other hand fear for legal consequences of medical mistakes was also mentioned several times. Several issues that, directly or indirectly, are associated with the high and rising caesarean section percentage, were discussed, like privatisation of the health care system and financial benefits for doctors to perform caesarean sections and reluctance to intervene in prolonged labour in first or second stage by rupturing membranes or performing vacuum extractions. The language barrier was adequately overtaken with help of Eka Gagu, a young Georgian gynaecologist.



Fig. 2 Van Roosmalen and Van den Akker with Eka Gagu

A side meeting was organised with Lela Shengelia, gynaecologist and co-author of the paper about the planned caesarean section audit in Georgia, currently working at the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health. A bulk of data concerning maternal health is available from her office. Interesting trends of maternal mortality were discussed.

Future cooperation

After a tour through Tengiz Asatiani's clinic a meeting was conducted to discuss future cooperation between the Working Party and counterparts in Georgia. An overview of possibilities, issues discussed with Lela Shengelia are added, follow below:

- Maternal mortality audit (focussing on mortality caused by hypertensive disorders)
- Maternal morbidity field site for validating WHO near miss criteria
- Caesarean section indications audit (see proposal)
- Life saving skills training in Emergency Obstetric Care

It was agreed upon that the first step could/should be to organise a conference with law people and stakeholders in maternal and neonatal care, in order to sensitize other counterparts and to create a larger platform for the cooperation. It was mentioned that outcome of the elections on 1st October should first be awaited, since changes in the Ministry could be of major influence for any future plans. Hopefully, Georgia's First Lady can also be involved in future cooperation.