

HIV+ moms deliver 100 virus-free babies

Malathy Iyer | TNN | Mar 13, 2016, 03.26 AM IST



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Representative image.

MUMBAI: The state-run J J Hospital's gynaecology department has scored a perfect 100 in one of its most trying tasks: delivering 100 HIV-free babies of HIV-positive mothers since March 2014.

The hospital, considered a referral centre for HIV-positive pregnant women who are

turned away from other hospitals, has performed deliveries of 1,200 HIV-positive women since 2000.

"We have been working on reducing mother-to-child transmission of HIV since 2000. But we have been pleasantly surprised to note that 100 children born since the start of the three-drug regimen (Tenofovir, Lamivudine and Efavirenz) are HIV-free," said Dr Rekha Daver, who heads JJ Hospital's gynaecology department and is on the National AIDS Control Organisation task force.

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36k HIV+ moms get pregnant every year

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Great work

Prakash Bodwade

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But the last 100 have been extra special for two reasons. Firstly, these HIV-positive pregnant women got special treatment due to the Union ministry of health's decision to start them on an anti-HIV regimen for life as soon they discovered

their pregnancy. Secondly, the children don't carry the dreaded virus. Without any drug intervention, children born to HIV-positive mothers have a 45% risk of HIV infection during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding. Between 2001 and 2002, India started giving a single dose (of Nevirapine tablet) to pregnant women and the newborn. "This helped cut down the transmission risk to a great extent, but the mothers risked developing drug resistance later on," said Dr Daver. Moreover, 7% of the children born to HIV-positive mothers in J J Hospital contracted the virus under the Nevirapine regimen; the national average was higher at 11%.

In 2014, India accepted the World Health Organisation's Option B+ that entails pregnant women taking the three-drug dose daily to reduce the viral load in their bodies.