

## Ladies first

Tuesday, October 09, 2012



**Last Sunday, Dr. Duru Shah became the first Indian to be awarded the International Federation of Gynecology & Obstetrics' Distinguished Merit Award. Dev Goswami talks to her about her award and gynecology**

Not only is Dr. Duru Shah the first Indian to be presented the FIGO (International Federation of Gynecology & Obstetrics) Distinguished Merit Award, she is also one of just three people in the world who will be receiving the award. Dr. Duru, who was felicitated this past Sunday, is the scientific director at Gynaecworld in Kemps Corner, and has initiated several social programs on adolescent reproduction and sexual health. She is also on the editorial boards of various journals and magazines and is a member of the Board of the International Menopause Society. We get talking to her about menopause, sex education and more...

**Tell us what it feels like to be awarded the FIGO distinguished merit award.**

Appreciation always feels good, especially when it comes from a globally renowned organisation. This award means a lot because it recognises the work I have done as president of FOGSI (Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India), in improving women's health.

**You are on the editorial board of Menopause International. How important do you think is the subject of menopause?**

I believe that the much neglected subject of menopause needs a lot of attention, primarily because nobody is looking at this issue at all. Today, the average life span of women in the country is 65+ and with an increase in the average lifespan, a lot of women run the risk of developing serious health conditions such as cardiovascular problems, cancer and osteoporosis, leading to fractures, disability and eventually a poor quality of life.

**In your book, Fetal Attraction, you talk about how the childbirth experience in India is far removed from the world. Can you tell us how it is different?**

Although there are many international books available about childbirth, there are very few Indian books that Indian mothers have access to. And most of these books do not cover the most important issues and aspects that are unique to India and our country, including the concept of community childbirth, where each member of the family/community get involved and has a say. Secondly, in modern India, especially among the upper class, most expectant mothers get their information from the internet, which may not always be scientifically accurate and can also be confusing. So, one has to be careful.

**People in our city believe that the lack of sex education is prevalent only in rural India and not in the urban areas. Do you subscribe to this theory?**

Absolutely not! Not only does the lack of sex education exist in rural areas, it also exists in urban India. Most schools don't cover it and even parents shy away from bringing up the subject with their children. So, we gynecologists have taken it upon ourselves to educate teenage girls.

**As a gynecologist who practices in Mumbai, what are the most common health conditions that you come across?**

The most common health condition amongst women is PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome). This is prevalent in different forms, either through erratic menstrual cycles, heavy periods or cosmetic issues including hair growth, loss of hair, acne, infertility issues and menstrual problems. Another common occurrence now is the rising number of infertility cases.

**Do you feel that these problems are caused partially due to the lifestyle of a metropolis such as Mumbai?**

Yes, lifestyle choices including lack of exercise, uncontrolled food habits, work and career pressures, all have a part to play in deteriorating health conditions. Also, delayed pregnancies due to work pressures and late marriage, excessive smoking, obesity and an increasing prevalence of polycystic ovaries are reasons why infertility is on the rise.

**With regards to both sex education and the medical conditions that you come across, what are your hopes for the future?**

Always hope for the better — there is something about hope that always has a positive feeling to it! I believe that on foremost priority should be a significant increase in women's education that is central to addressing women's health issues. When I talk about education of women, I am not only talking academically, but also about health-related education. When you educate girls and young women about reproductive and sexual health, you are educating the mothers of tomorrow, which will reap rich rewards in the future.

#### **About Fetal Attraction**

Fetal Attraction is a pregnancy resource book. Dr. Duru explains that the book makes for easy reading and has been written in a manner similar to the way she talks to her patients. She also tells us that food and nutrition is an important topic that the book covers. She says, "The nutrition advice suggested in international books is not unique to India's taste and that is an important area that my book covers."

You can buy the book from [www.flipkart.com](http://www.flipkart.com) for INR 250.

<http://www.afternoondc.in/>