

INTRODUCTION

Infection is a condition caused by invasion of the body or a body part by pathogenic organisms, which multiplies and produces harmful effects on the body's tissues (*Hirsh, et al., 2002*).

Infections are classified into two types: community acquired which are natural diseases process that develop before a patient admission to the hospital, and hospital acquired which occurs in hospitalized patients ,that were not present or incubated when the patient was admitted to the hospital (*Linton, et al.,2000*).

There are three main routes of spread of organisms causing hospital acquired infection, self infection, cross infection, and environment infection. (*Shanson , 1999*).

It was found by national maternal study that the maternal mortality rate in Egypt due to infection 8% among women in reproductive age (*Egyptian Ministry of health and population, 2001*).the maternal mortality rate due to infection in Africa 10%of maternal death (*kalid, et al., 2006*).

The Egyptian government Focusing on improving obstetric care has contributed to a significant reduction in maternal deaths over the last decade (*El-zanaty& Way, 2004*). Substandard care by health providers in particular obstetricians and general practitioners remains the most important avoidable factor, contributing to 54% of maternal deaths (*Elsherbiny, et al., 2004*).

Infection control is a quality standard patient care and is essential for the well being of the patients and the safety of both patients and staff (*Hassan, et al., 2004*). It is measures practiced by health care personnel intended to prevent spread, transmission and acquisition of infectious agents or pathogens between patients, from health care Workers to patient and from patients to health care workers in the health care setting (*Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), 2007*).

The primary aim of infection control is to prevent acquiring avoidable infection .achieving this aim requires all health care staff maintain the highest possible standards of clinical practice and follow sound infection control principles. Assessment of Infection control measures regarding knowledge and practice is necessary as part of safe working under the control of substance health hazard (*Hassan,et al., 2004*).

Health care professionals are widely exposed to large numbers and varieties of microorganisms ,HIV and others blood borne contagious infection have increased the need to protect both women and midwives from infection. (*Johnson & Taylor, 2000*). Midwives are at risk from infection during procedures such as episiotomy suturing, inserting and removing urinary catheters, using umbilical catheters, with epidural and with intravenous lines (for example to administer oxytocin to a woman in labour in order to augment the contractions) and assisted deliveries (with forceps or ventouse), Midwives often face blood splashes and facial and body blood and amniotic fluid contamination. During such procedures, standard precautions and general principles of asepsis are vital (*Sharma, &Kumar, 2001, Fraser, et al., 2003*).

During labor, it is nursing responsibility to see that universal precautions or observed consistently strategies for prevention of blood-borne infection include barrier protection and good infection control technique. Gloving must be used for many contacts with blood, fluids and double gloving is recommended for nurses who perform vaginal examination. Water proof gowns, masks, caps, and eyes shields are used for splash exposure and should be worn during procedures such as amniotomy, vaginal delivery or other procedure that may cause droplets of blood or amniotic fluid to splash (*Dickason, et al., 1998; Bennett, et al., 2000*).

JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM.

During labour and delivery many small lacerations, some microscopic in size occurs in the endometrium, cervix and vagina. This allows bacteria to enter the tissue and also the risk of infection increases because of the acidity of the vagina reduced by the amniotic fluid, blood and lochia and also because of the opening of the cervix during the process of labor and repeating vaginal examination. So it was very important to assess the nurses in applying infection control measures in the labour and delivery unit to prevent infection and decrease maternal morbidity and mortality.
