

Preventing postpartum hemorrhage in low-resource settings.

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Abstract:

OBJECTIVES: To review the literature to determine the most effective methods for preventing postpartum hemorrhage (PPH), the single most important cause of maternal death worldwide. **METHODS:** Systematic review of published randomized controlled trials and relevant reviews. **RESULTS:** Review of the literature confirms that active management of the third stage of labor, especially the administration of uterotonic drugs, reduces the risk of PPH due to uterine atony without increasing the incidence of retained placenta or other serious complications. Oxytocin is the preferred uterotonic drug compared with syntometrine, but misoprostol also can be used to prevent hemorrhage in situations where parenteral medications are not available (e.g. at home births in developing countries). **CONCLUSIONS:** The use of active management of the third stage of labor to prevent PPH due to uterine atony should be expanded, especially in developing country settings