

# Two men in first batch of midwifery educators' training at Vanivilas hosp

## Help Make Labour Less Painful Via Interventions

Mini.Thomas@timesgroup.com

**Bengaluru:** Two men are among the 29 students attending the first batch of midwifery educators' training at National Midwifery Training Institute (NMTI) at Vanivilas Hospital in Bengaluru under Sarah Coxon, an international midwifery educator from London.

Coxon and Vanivilas superintendent Dr Savita C claim that Kenchraj Kammar and Kiran Beelagi, both from Belagavi district, are the first male midwife educator students in Karnataka. They could perhaps be among the first of their kind in the country, the duo adds. NMTI is the first institute of its kind in public sector in south India.

Midwifery educators not only impart training to Nurse Practitioner Midwives, who are licensed to practise midwifery in high caseload facilities across the country, but also perform clinical

### Coxon suggests C-section only if necessary

Asked how different the midwifery practices in India and the UK are, Coxon says, "In India, it is more medicalised." She recommends episiotomy and Cesarean section only if they are absolutely necessary.

Talking about the students enrolled in the current batch, she says: "We teach them about respectful maternity care." Coxon loves babies and has four children.



**CAREGIVERS:** The authorities claim Kiran (L) and Kenchraj are the first male midwife educator students in Karnataka

"I truly believe midwives are able to give quality care, especially to low-risk mothers



**Janhavi Nilekani** | CHAIRPERSON OF AASTRIKA FOUNDATION, WHICH ALONG WITH UNICEF IS FUNDING NATIONAL MIDWIFERY TRAINING INSTITUTE

practice themselves.

Kammar has facilitated 12 childbirths independently. The 36-year-old helps pregnant women manage labour pain and teaches them positions that make childbirth easier. "Some women I attended to were able to deliver without any injections or medications to decrease labour pain. I give them back massage that helps reduce pain. Maybe, I'm stronger than female midwives and that makes a

lot of difference," he says, adding that non-pharmacological interventions can help make labour less painful.

"Hip squeezing, wherein we provide support to pelvic bones, can help relax the nerves and ease pain. Feather touch or a brisk touch on the woman's back also helps relieve pain," he explains.

"Women are open to them. There hasn't been any woman who said 'I don't want you'," smiles Coxon, director

### TIMES VIEW

Think midwifery and the image of a woman comes to mind. But it's heartening to know that two Belagavi men are smashing gender barriers and passionately training to be educators in a profession where males are a minority worldwide. Midwives, who provide crucial support and companionship to women during pregnancy, childbirth and the post-partum period, are an integral part of the reproductive care ecosystem. With their role assuming even more significance amid a shortage of obstetricians, we need more such skilled professionals to raise the standards of maternal care. It's stories like these that can help society shed biases and draw more men to the field.

had a smooth labour and soon after the baby was born, she broke into tears. "Those were tears of gratitude," he says. At Vanivilas, birth companions are allowed since 2019. The woman had her husband as her birth companion and Kammar was his go-to guy.

"A woman can choose any position she likes during birthing. Squatting helps open the pelvis, while standing makes it easier for the baby to move down the passage because of gravity," says 38-year-old Beelagi, who was earlier working as a nursing officer in the government.

Asked whether he faces challenges in a job dominated by women, Kammar says, "Not really. What matters most is the rapport you establish with the mother and the support you provide her." During antenatal period when the woman is having severe contractions, he makes her perform exercises to make labour easier. Kammar was earlier working as a nursing officer at taluk Hospital, Belagavi. "I was OT in charge," he says. A postgrad in obstetrics and gynaecological nursing, he was interested in the specialisation. "Back then, I was the only male OBG nursing student in the state," he says.

of the institute. "Also, Kammar and Beelagi are very enthusiastic and passionate about their job," adds Coxon, who has been a midwife for about 23 years and had a stint with National Health Service, the publicly funded healthcare system in England.

One of the women Kammar attended to at Vanivilas was deaf and dumb. He communicated with her via sign language and slowly understood what she wanted. She