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## Doctor To Be, Father To Be- A Call for Male Medical Students and Residents

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During the very first semester of medical school, about six years ago, I went through the biggest change of my life, and became a father. Before the birth, my wife and I underwent great preparation. We learned about the three stages of labor, positions, and exercises for the due date. The birth was an amazing and astonishing experience, for my wife, the baby, and for me as well. However, it felt that in all the preparations, there was one person missing who would and should be noticed - me, the future father.

Childbirth education has been supported by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). (1) The courses are varied in style and modality, but the vast majority of them deal with the health of the woman and the newborn before and after the birth, dealing with mental and physical difficulty as well as the first steps of parenthood, such as breastfeeding, safety of the baby and dealing with peripartum depression (PPD). Generally, the main aim of the prenatal education programs is to equip the parents with the information to be able to make resourceful decisions during labor, childbirth, and parenthood. (2)(3) Naturally, the courses are aimed at women and there is little, if any, reference to men.

Over the years, the role of men in the family and in marital relationships seems to have changed. Active and involved parenting in children's lives and taking responsibility in financial and safety matters, is the norm. This is basic and critical for the wellbeing and mental health of the family. This requirement has three directions - from the man towards the partner, towards the child and towards himself.

As part of the social process of privatizing and accessing information, the simple person who is not a doctor and without professional training has been given very great power into his hands. The hegemony of physicians is no longer as exclusive as in ancient times, and paternalism has given way to the democratization of medicine. Of course, this process has advantages and disadvantages, and this is not the place to go into detail. I want to highlight one point that is important to me. Our approach as male medical students, future fathers, and future physicians is crucial. We can make the reliable, evidence-based information accessible to men - from an inclusive and strong masculine angle. Investigate, study, and describe the processes a man goes through during childbirth. Not only as a helper and supportive of the partner, which is without a

doubt important but as male personal empowerment. Transform the experience from which not only a baby is born, but a new relationship is born, and a new man is born. The methods of operation are varied. Create male childbirth preparation courses; Integrate paternal content within existing courses; Encourage medical, clinical and psychological research (which is almost non-existent at present) on the effects of childbirth on men in various aspects, unfortunately, some are not easy. Mostly, to give an attentive and compassionate place to the difficulties that exist, and to normalize masculinity from a chauvinistic and old-fashioned place to an updated, sensitive and much stronger character.

Thus, a few months ago I launched a project designed to accompany expectant parents towards childbirth. The sessions were one-on-one, giving them tools and knowledge regarding the birth itself, the woman and the newborn's medicine, emergencies and dealing with them. We talked about the birth situation in the hospital, and how to deal with the difficulty of seeing the partner in pain and difficulty. We also discussed the days after birth, returning home, and the transition from a couple to a triangle where the new child is dominant and can be threatening.

From my point of view, and personal experience, the birth of the first child is a groundbreaking event in a person's life. A unique point in a lifetime when one can transcend cynicism and daily activity and look at the things that matter in life. I call on to my colleagues, medical students, and young doctors, those who are already fathers and those who are not yet, to take advantage of our unique dual position. Be the dominant and heading voice in this broad social and moral change. Take the lead of the educational opportunity that has come our way and create more aware, loving, and better men, fathers, and physicians.

## **References**

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