

Age Matters.

Across the world the average age of childbirth is rising markedly.

There are numerous studies reporting multiple adverse fetal and maternal outcomes, associated with advanced maternal age.

It is known that women greater than 35 years of age are more likely to go post-term. Fetal loss which remains largely unexplained increases with older mothers as they are more likely to have medical comorbidity like obesity diabetes and high blood pressure. The incidence of stillbirth in women without medical disease is low.

Aging impairs muscular function of the womb and that is the reason for increased rate of caesarian section and instrumental vaginal deliveries as well as excessive bleeding after delivery.

The question remains will interventions at term such as induction of labor improve the outcome? It is advisable to offer delivery at term to minimize further screening tests of fetal wellbeing knowing that they are not 100% reassuring since fetal loss usually occurs in normal grown babies of older women.

There is a commonly held belief that inducing labor leads to an increase in the caesarian section rate. Epidemiological studies show that women aged 40 years or older have a similar stillbirth risk at 39 weeks to 25-29 year olds at 41 weeks.

Given the available evidence, the latest recommendation from the Royal College of obstetricians and Gynecology states that women over 40 years should be offered the choice of indication of labor if not delivered by 39 weeks as this is likely to reduce the risk of stillbirth rate and might not influence the caesarian section rate.

