

An ordinary infection caused the death of a mother and her unborn child

At the beginning of the year the medical community in Chisinau was troubled by Rodica Truseni's story. She died at the Perinatalogical Centre of the Municipal Clinic Hospital. The death followed a serious extra genital infection - thromboembolism - from which the pregnant woman was suffering. Although the doctors fought to save her until the end, they were unable to save her unborn child. Since the beginning of the year, there have been five cases of maternal mortality in the republic.

Rodica Cheianu and her partner lived together for five years in the Truseni village, Chisinau municipality. Last autumn, the young couple decided to legalize their relationship and had a beautiful wedding. The joy of the two was emphasized by the fact that the young wife was pregnant. For seven months the pregnancy developed without any complications, the young woman checking regularly with the family doctor. At the end of January, during the flu epidemic, Rodica suddenly came down with a respiratory virus, 'When she had her check up, the patient complained of feeling weak, she was pale, was coughing and had a running nose' said Dr Simion Grozavu, a gynecologist at the Truseni Health Centre. After a rigorous examination it was established that she had pneumonia and must be urgently admitted to the hospital. After two weeks Rodica saw the doctor again. While she was getting ready to see the doctor, due to a shortage of breath, she had a heart attack and fell on the floor. The doctors tried to save the lives of the woman and child, but their efforts were in vain.

The death followed an asymptomatic evolution, atypical, extremely aggressive of the thromboembolism of the pulmonary artery. This means blood clots united and created a conglomerate and blocked the pulmonary artery. Unfortunately, the pathology of the patient occurred atypically and asymptomatic leading to her death. During pregnancy, the coagulation of blood increases in order to prepare the body for a possible loss of blood during birth. In combination with a latent phlebitis of the blood vessels of the lower limbs or of the pelvis, the infections of this type lead to the formation of thrombosis.

The relatives and the desperate husband blamed the doctors for the loss they suffered. That is how the case came to be debated in all medical circles. 'For a month Rodica had been monitored by doctors. All analyses revealed that she was in perfect health. How was it possible to lose her in two weeks at the age of 24?' said her disgusted relatives.

The autopsy performed by the specialists of the Health Ministry, the Department of Health in Chisinau, the Municipal Hospital No 1, and the Nicolae Testimiteanu State University of Medicine and Pharmacy (SUMP) confirmed that the thrombi were 10 days old since they extracted from the patient a thrombus of 15 cm.

Dr Valentin Friptu, chief of the obstetrics-gynecology department of the SUMP and main specialist in Mother & Child Health Issues, declared that Rodica could have survived if she had seen the doctor as soon as she contacted the virus. 'The woman believed that she could treat herself at home. But she did not know that pregnant women have a weak immunity and are prone infections. She went to the doctor too late, when the disease had progressed significantly. If of viruses are treated early there is no death,' says Valentin Friptu.

Among the causes of maternal death are hemorrhages and illegal abortions

From the beginning of the year until now 5 women have died in the republic due to childbirth or complications of pregnancy. Last year 10 maternal deaths were registered out of 36,000 childbirths, which show a risk factor of 1 in 4,000. In 2001 the mortality maternal rate was 43.9 deaths per 100,000 live births.

An analysis of maternal mortality over the past seven years reveal a stable decreasing dynamic of the maternal deaths with 8.3 in 100,000 live births. Still, the problems associated with childbirth are multiple. There is a high rate of unplanned pregnancies and abortions. Besides, every other woman who gives birth in Moldova suffers from anemia and every third one - chronic pathologies associated to pregnancy. These, along with the lack of responsibilities or the ignorance of women regarding their own health attract the birth of a large number of dead babies or the death of new-born in their first months of life.

Valentin Friptu told us that in the past three years in Moldova the maternal deaths are caused especially by extra genital pathologies, followed by hemorrhages, infections and complications of the abortion, especially illegal abortions. This occurs when there are no barriers in terminating pregnancies. At the moment, the department of the obstetrics-gynecology of the SUMP jointly with the Mother and Child Institute are developing a new project - 'A Safe Abortion' - that aims to inform on the modern methods of performing abortions, accessible and with minimum risk for the health of the mother, such as vacuum-aspiration and pill-abortion. The National Programme for perithonology provided all health county centers with the necessary medical equipment offering assistance. In spite of this in a number of rural locations there are deficiencies in offering emergency assistance. This fact caused another maternal death that occurred in the first days of the year in Telenesti. The woman was admitted to the maternity and on Christmas Day she gave birth to a baby boy. The night following the birth she had a hemorrhage caused by the rupture of the uterus. Because the equipment in Telenesti is worn out, the patient had to be transported to Orhei. By the time the ambulance arrived, the woman died due to heavy bleeding. The doctors believe that the woman would have survived if at the moment the hemorrhage occurred a specialized team of well equipped doctors would have performed necessary surgery.

The Republic of Moldova intends to reduce the maternal mortality rate

Along with other 191 world states, the Republic of Moldova signed the Millennium Declaration and intends to reduce by three quarters by 2015 the maternal mortality rate. The national healthcare policies envision to reduce the maternal mortality rate to 15 per 100,000 live births by the year 2020. Studies have found that there is a high probability that the Republic of Moldova could accomplish this goal, mainly due to the financial and logistical assistance of the specialized UN agencies in the Republic of Moldova - UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO.

At the same time, Valentin Friptu believes that to improve women's health and to decrease maternal mortality is absolutely vital to family planning, especially in rural regions, to increase the access level of pregnant women to specialized medical assistance, including the use of contraceptive pills, the eradication of any form of violence against women, as well as increasing the access to information regarding women's health.

Natalia Costas