

Obstetric analgesia in Hong Kong

To the Editor—The survey of obstetric epidural analgesia in Hong Kong by Chen et al (HKMJ 1996;2:390-6) did not show the exact number of primigravida or multiparous parturients or the ages of these mothers. I am sure these factors do play a part in the selection of analgesic method to be used and also the outcome of the method of delivery.

SG Chua, MB, BS, FRCOG
Room 509 Edward Mansion
141 Prince Edward Road
Kowloon, Hong Kong

In reply—We wish to thank Dr SG Chua for his interest in our article.¹ We agree with him that parity may influence the method of pain relief and the outcome of epidural analgesia. Nulliparous parturients have been found to be more likely to use epidural analgesia for labour pain than their parous counterparts.² Interestingly, however, parous parturients who received epidural analgesia were associated with a higher incidence of instrumental delivery.³ The authors suggested that the parous group may have been selected to receive epidural analgesia for a reason that simultaneously increases the likelihood of instrumental delivery. Overall, 39% of all deliveries at our institution during the period of review were nulliparous. Unfortunately, we did not have sufficient data to compare the parity of the parturients who had epidural analgesia. As for age, there is some evidence to suggest that older mothers are likely to have a more complicated delivery although

it is unclear whether age per se will influence the outcome of epidural analgesia.^{4,5} We have not found any evidence to suggest that maternal age will affect the choice of labour analgesia.

PP Chen, FANZCA, FHKAM (Anaesthesiology)
BB Lee, FANZCA, FHKAM (Anaesthesiology)
M Ma, BHSc, RN
VYS Hung, BSc, RN
WD Ngan Kee, FANZCA, FHKAM (Anaesthesiology)
Department of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Prince of Wales Hospital
Shatin, Hong Kong

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