

Enhancing hot debrief in obstetric anaesthesia:

A survey of current views and the use of ‘Obs-CARES’ as a structured mnemonic

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Introduction

Debrief is a **unique, interactive, structured team conversation** used to **reflect** on actions, events and thought processes after a **stressful or traumatic event**. Hot debrief occurs minutes to hours after the event and focuses on **emotional support, identifying immediate needs for environmental modifications** and to signpost the team to local wellbeing services.

The delivery suite is subject to **frequent critical and stressful events** due to the inherent unpredictable nature of obstetrics and the ever-increasing percentage of patients classified as high-risk [1]. Hot debrief may have a key role in **supporting staff wellbeing** and promoting an **open safety culture** in the demanding practice of obstetric anaesthesia.

Methods

We conducted an anonymous online survey to anaesthetists in Southeast England.

The survey inquired about the practice of hot debrief and gathered feedback on a mnemonic ‘**Obs-CARES**’, a tool designed by us specifically for use in obstetrics (figure 1).

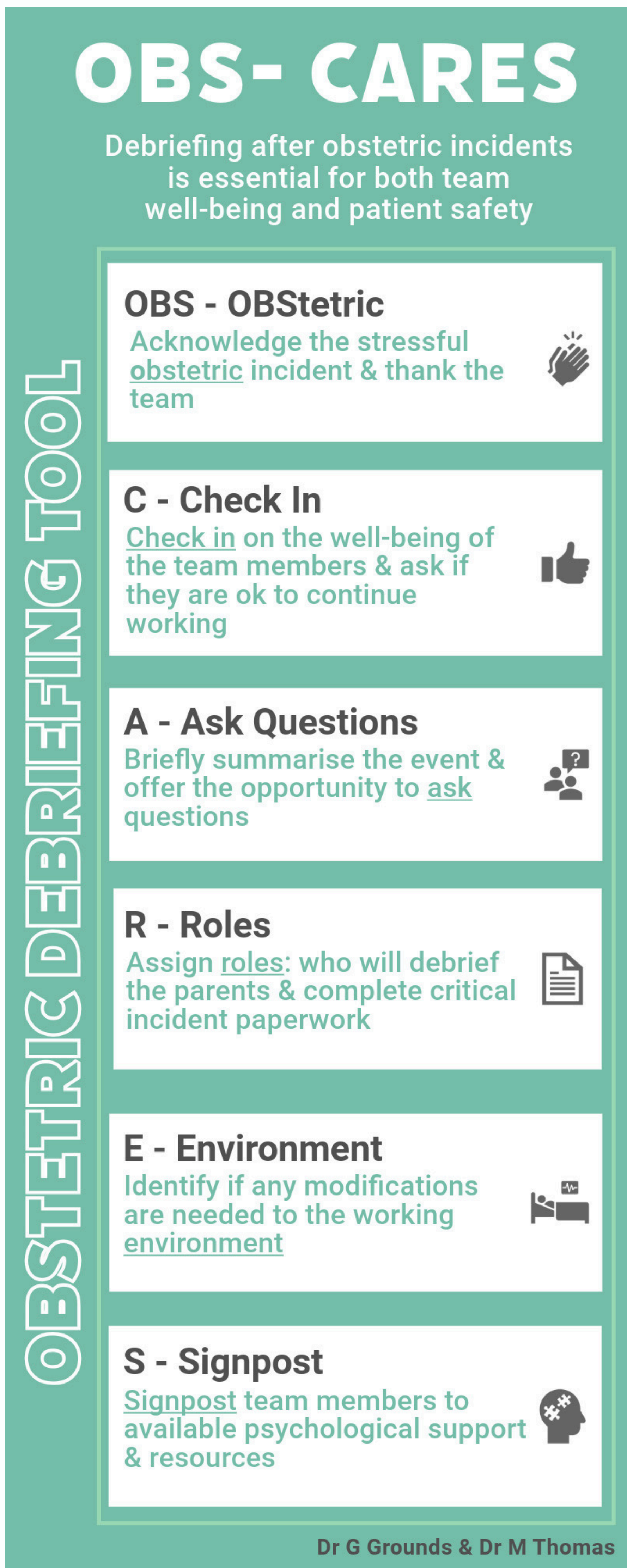
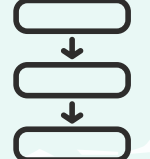
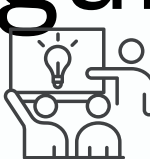


Figure 1. Obs-CARES – a structured tool for hot debrief in obstetric anaesthesia

Results

The survey was completed by **41 Anaesthetists** (85% registrar or more senior level) in our region.

-  **95% had been involved in a traumatic or stressful incident in obstetrics** (figure 2)
-  **56% had previously participated in a hot debrief** in obstetrics
-  **80% reported never receiving training** on hot debrief
-  Only **5% were aware of a structured hot debriefing tool** (figure 3)
-  **98% agreed the mnemonic (Obs-CARES) would be useful** in practice (figure 4)
-  **90% would like teaching and training** in hot debrief

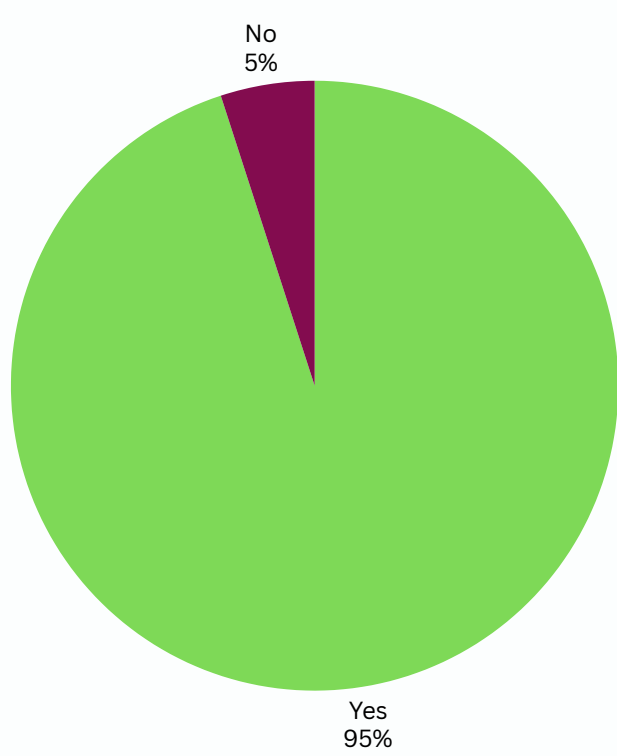


Figure 2: Involvement in stressful or traumatic event in obstetrics

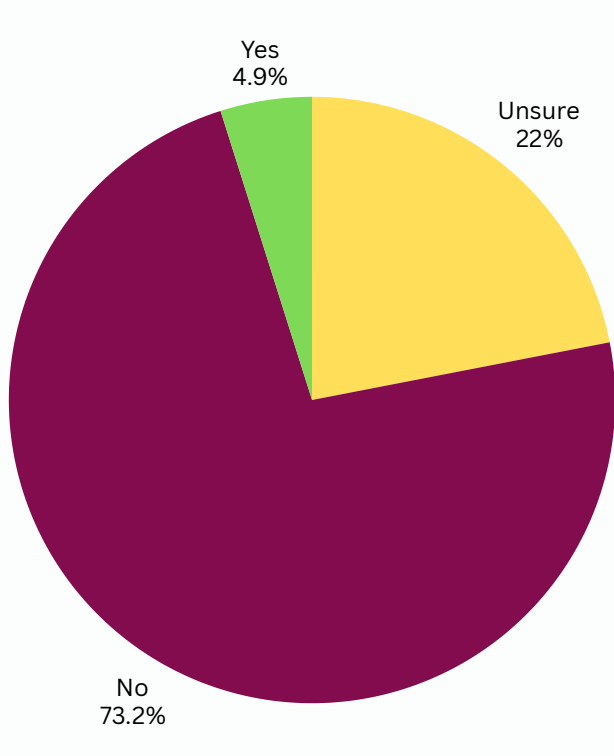


Figure 3: Are you aware of any structured tools that can be used to debrief for an obstetric event?

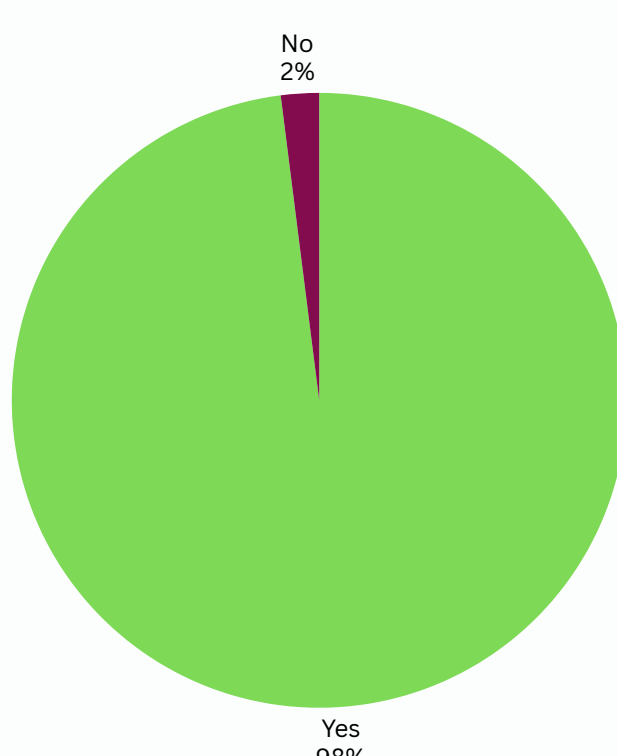


Figure 4: Do you think the mnemonic Obs-CARES would be useful?

Discussion

Whilst hot debrief is a practice **recommended** by the Obstetric Anaesthetists’ Association (OAA), a structured tool for hot debrief specifically in obstetrics is lacking [2]. From our survey, we identified a **need for teaching and training** in this area and received **positive feedback** on our structured tool, which incorporates a simple mnemonic (**‘Obs-CARES’**) to aid in the conduct of a hot debrief on delivery suite.

1. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence: Intrapartum care. NICE. 2023. [NICE Guideline NG235]. [https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng235]. Accessed 20 January 2025.
2. Quick Reference Handbook. Obstetric Anaesthetists’ Association. 2024. Available from [https://www.oaa-anaes.ac.uk/downloads/oaa-qrh/obstetric-quick-reference-handbook-jan-24-.pdf]. Accessed 20 January 2025.