



Forceps births will be ancient history if Odón clinical trials succeed

Highlights

S&T Innovation: Newest device to help prolonged second stage labor in 120 years – may replace forceps.

Sector: Health

Program: Maternal healthcare

Development Challenges: Saving Lives at Birth (GRAND CHALLENGE)

Location: Argentina, South Africa

Potential for Replication: Extremely High. Global

Implementing Partners: World Health Organization

Host Country Counterparts: Ministry of Health (Argentina and South Africa)

Private Sector Partners: Becton Dickinson

Other Donors: Government of Norway, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Grand Challenges Canada, and UK Department for International Development (DFID)

Other Partners/Affiliates: Jorge Ernesto Odón, device inventor

One in ten births requires some sort of assistance when second stage labor slows down enough that attendants grow concerned about mother, baby, or both. Until now, only three types of artificial assistance have been available: forceps, vacuum extraction, or cesarean – all of which bear varying degrees of risk for mother and child and all of which require a trained physician or surgeon.

The Odón device, now undergoing clinical trials in Argentina and South Africa, with seed funds from the USAID-supported Saving Lives at Birth initiative, is the first new approach to assisted delivery since the ‘ventouse’ (vacuum extraction) was developed 120 years ago. And obstetricians are still using variations of forceps, which were invented some 400 years ago.

The ingenuity of the Odón device is equaled only by its remarkable story: it is the brainchild of an Argentinian auto mechanic with no medical background, who imagined how a parlor trick to remove a cork from inside an empty bottle using a plastic bag could translate into a real world use. The idea that the “air clamp” phenomenon could help deliver babies literally woke him up one night and the rest, as they say, is history.

The Odón device has successfully delivered 30 healthy babies, and in the process has undergone some fine-tuning by the World Health Organization, which has been working with the innovator since 2008. The Saving Lives at BirthUSAID-supported clinical field trials will further test its efficacy. Meanwhile, WHO and Odón have entered into an agreement with a medical device firm, Becton Dickinson, which will mass-produce and market the disposable devices following successful trials.