AIMS For a better birth...

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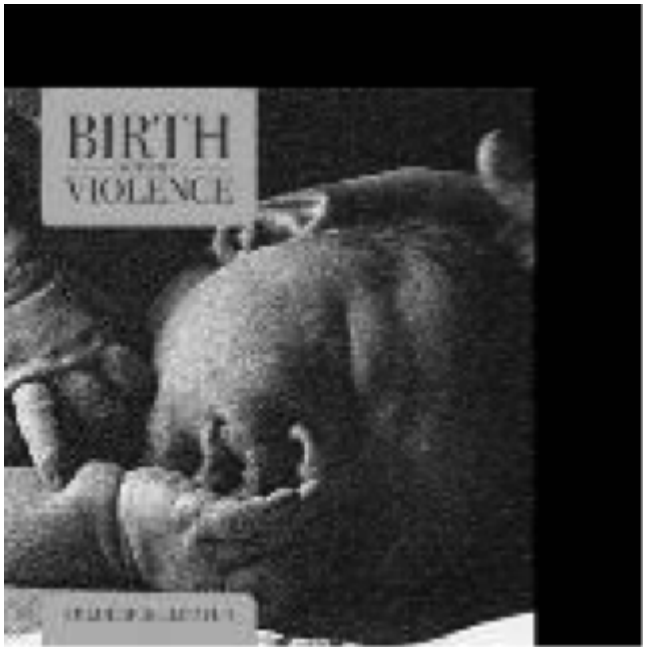
(1918 – 2017)

Known for his groundbreaking 1974 book Birth Without Violence (made into a documentary film on 2008), Leboyer was a game changer in maternity and obstetrics.

While by no means the first to argue that interventions in birth were potentially damaging in some cases, he was the first person to be able to have his concerns widely heard for the impact on the baby during birth. At a time when some routine operations were performed on babies without anaesthetic, because it was still considered that newborns couldn't feel pain, Mr Leboyer (he preferred Mr to Dr) argued that the birth process for babies could be hugely traumatic, and that we should do what we could to minimise this for them, as well as for the mother.

Under his care, birth room lights were dimmed to aid the transition to light for the baby, and to reduce over stimulation. He advocated immediate skin to skin and optimal cord clamping – and not surprisingly, his methods were scorned and rejected by other medical men of the time who felt that doctors needed bright lights to decide whether a baby's colour was acceptable, and that violent crying was a sign of a healthy infant.

However, parents continued to press for their providers to support his methods, and slowly, changes were made that we see in some of today's birth rooms. Leboyer's understanding of birth from the baby's perspective – that some interventions, even if necessary – may be brutal and traumatic for babies as well as their mothers - was instrumental in changing firmly held beliefs and practices, and leading to more births without violence.


BIRTH
VIOLENCE