

Hospital births hazardous for mothers, babies

JERUSALEM, NZPA- from their mothers at the most sensitive point of their relationship. He said studies linked separation at birth to later child abuse.

Reuter — An international health official has warned doctors that hospital births endanger the health of mothers and babies.

Dr Marsden Wagner, European Regional Director of the World Health Organisation, told an international medical conference today that hospital births risked lives because of impersonal procedures and over-use of technology and drugs.

Wagner criticised hospital procedures once reserved for only the most extreme cases. "Ten out of every 1000 babies in developed countries die. In an effort to save those 10 babies, we put 990 babies through procedures that profoundly disrupt the experience of birth," he said.

"I am convinced the procedure of placing all newborn babies in one room was the biggest mistake of modern medicine," he told the five-day international congress on the psychology and medicine of birth.

His remarks drew applause from some of the doctors, midwives, social workers and childbirth educators at the congress. Others defended the system.

"Technology is merely a tool whose worth depends on how it is used," countered Dr Ram Ishay, president of the Israel Medical Association. "Usually its use is justified."

Wagner said a hospital nursery was a cradle of germs, separating babies from their mothers at the most sensitive point of their relationship. He said studies linked separation at birth to later child abuse.

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