Management of Postpartum Fever

Definition of Postpartum Fever:

- Oral temperature of 38°C or more is considered to be febrile morbidity in the postpartum period and needs to be investigated.
- If a woman develops a fever the doctor must be notified and a complete history and physical should be performed along with a UA and a QBC.
- If H&P, UA and QBC are all normal, the woman should be hydrated, 1g paracetamol given and the woman observed over the next 12 hours. 3% of these women will become afebrile within 8-12 hours (this condition is called febrile inflammatory response or benign fever and is common after delivery).
- If the temperature remains above 38°C after two consecutive checks 4 hours apart, the doctor must be called again and after thorough examination and laboratory tests, antibiotics may be used at the discretion of the doctor.

Causes of postpartum fever:

- Benign fever (as discussed above)
- Engorgement of the breast (milk fever), should not last more then 24 hour
- Infections of the urogenital tract: Endometritis
  Urinary tract infection
  Infected perineal tears/repairs
- Distant infections: Wound infection (CS)
  Thrombophlebitis
  Chest infection
  Other disease (malaria, TB, etc)

If any of these conditions are diagnosed, appropriate treatment should be started immediately.

Remember, postpartum fever due to genital tract infection (Puerperal Sepsis) is an important cause of maternal death and should be diagnosed early and treated appropriately.