Eliminating MTCT of HIV

What is the issue?

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A recent study shows complete elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV is possible.

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How HIV is transmitted to child?

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- Mother-to-child transmission MTCT is the primary route of transmission of HIV among children.
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- Babies are infected during pregnancy, labour, delivery or while breastfeeding.
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What is the status of MTCT HIV in India?

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- Currently 5% of babies born to those who are HIV-positive get infected, if transmission rate is below 2% it is considered as elimination.
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- According to NACO, only about 52.7% of pregnant mothers seek skilled care out of an estimated 27 million pregnancies in a year.
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- An estimated 35,200 pregnancies occur in HIV-positive women and more than 10,300 infected babies are born annually, without any intervention.
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What are the methods to prevent MTCT?

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- **Multidrug Therapy -** India is following the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended ‘multidrug therapy’, which is a combination of three drugs — tenofovir, lamivudine and efavirenz (TLE).
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- Affected women need to take it all their lives and nevirapine syrup for six weeks only for their babies.
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- Multidrug therapy is usually adequate to drastically reduce a mother’s viral load.
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- **Caesarean** - During a baby’s journey through the vaginal passage, contact with abrasions, secretions and blood, which contain the virus, increases the risk of transmission.
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- Elective caesarean section and no breastfeeding will limits the transmission.
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What are the challenges in India?

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- Doctors recommend that HIV-positive women should not breastfeed as their milk harbours the virus.
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- For patients from underprivileged classes, replacing the nutrition for the baby without breastfeeding is difficult.
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- The enormous population in India makes it challenging for health-care workers to reach out to every pregnant woman.
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- On the other hand, pregnant women too often delay registering for antenatal care.
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Source: The Hindu

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