This week, Katharine Barnard, faculty member at Family Health Center of Worcester, shares with us a reflection from a recent night attending to two women in labour. Very different women with similar outcomes; but I think Katharine said it best in her email to me:

_I wrote this the morning after being on call with two remarkable deliveries. I was struck, as always, by the power and wonder of birth. It was also striking how these two patients, who were so different from one another, were the same in their immediate love for their child. It was a pleasure to accompany them for that moment in time._

You can respond with comment to Katharine at Katharine.Barnard@fhcw.org or to the list serve directly. Enjoy.

**One hour, two births**

First to arrive is Monisha – at once educated and mature, and afraid of what is coming. The power and potential pain of it is terrifying to her, even though this is not her first labor. Her attentive husband strokes her hair, saying “it’s all going to be OK.” It seems he’s trying to reassure himself as much as her. He strokes so firmly her eyebrows get pulled up with every swipe – pat, pat, pat – she blinks with each pass of his hand, and seems calmed.

Next door is Destiny: alone, with her “mom” on Facetime. Her face scattered with jeweled piercings and her blue-tinted contacts are a shocking contrast to her smooth, bittersweet chocolate skin. “I’m scared” she says. “People die pushing. What if I die?” Later, “What if the baby is born with his insides outside his body?” and “What if he withdraws? What if I did something to him?” We try to offer her a steady presence.

I’m called to Monisha’s room. The fetal heart rate has dropped. Her eyes are wide as we flip one way, the other way, start the IV. She really just wants her epidural, but we can’t stop for that now, there’s no time.

Destiny is ready to push. The baby comes smoothly and steadily, a perfect round head and perfect beautiful body. She clutches him, sobbing, her thick fake lashes matted with tears. “I love him so much, I can’t stop crying.”
A call again from next door. Again the fetal heart rate is down, but this time, dilation is complete. The baby barrels out with one push, covered with blood and poop and meconium. Monisha reaches for him with a sigh and a folding in, and brings him to her chest. All the fear and worry are gone, erased by this little presence. Dad leans over, cupping his hands around the baby’s ears so all he will hear in those first moments is Daddy singing a Hindi prayer.

I check in with Destiny. She is in a hot debate on the phone as to whether the baby looks black or whether he looks Spanish. Her mom sighs, “well that’s gonna be for you to figure out, honey.” But then she cradles him to breastfeed, and all of those cares fall away, and she is in love.