

Maternal and Child Health: A Current Perspective

Dr Asis De

Professor, Community Medicine, Manipal College of Medical Sciences Pokhara, Nepal

Every year half a million women die from causes related to pregnancy and child birth. Almost one death every minute of the day and the night. Almost all are in developing countries and most of these deaths are preventable with attainable resources and skills. For each woman who dies there are countless more who suffer permanent damage to their health and live with morbidity.

It is estimated that children below 5 years and women in the reproductive age group (15-49 years) comprise more than 30 percent of the population in most of the developing and under developed countries. They constitute the largest vulnerable group in the society. The health status of children and women has been a source of concern over the years. The infant morbidity and mortality rates swell as maternal mortality rate continue to be high in the low resource countries even today.

Motherhood is the most significant phenomenon in the life of a woman and pregnancy is a vital event in her life. Child health is closely related to maternal health. Women & child are inseparable in care cycle. Mother & children make 70% of population & are most vulnerable. In every community mothers are among the groups that are vulnerable to disease, disability and death due to the special characteristics of pregnancy related to biological process of reproduction. Among these mothers, certain individuals are at special risk of disease or complications because of factors in their biological make up, their environment or both.

In comparison to developed countries maternal and infant mortality and morbidity are high in the developing and under developed countries & large number of mothers suffer from hazards of pregnancy.

There is wide variation in the maternal and childhood mortality and morbidity among the developed and developing/underdeveloped countries. Approximately in developed countries: 50% deaths >70 years and MMR around 30 while in the developing countries: 50% deaths <5 years and MMR is around 480.

There are sincere efforts to bring down the MMR and IMR but for many reasons the mortality rate in the low

resource countries are yet to come down to the expected level.

Recent years have witnessed a growing consciousness of the need to improve the quality and coverage of health care in developing countries with emphasis on Primary Health Care to serve the Alma-Ata ideal of health for all by the year 2000 A.D., followed by the millennium development goals to be achieved by the year 2015.

There is a need to focus our attention to find out how best the desired level can be attained.

Paucity of available resources in the developing countries and proper allocation to the needy are the greatest hindrance in health care approach.

One of the solutions to these problems might be further expansion of health manpower in the country, but lack of resources come in the way of such an expansion.

There is thus a need for a more realistic approach to the health problems to make the best use of existing resources for the benefit of the majority

The research articles in the field of maternal and child health might throw some light as to what is happening and the modalities to tackle the situation.

We tried to invite articles from developed and developing countries to compare various aspects viz. causation, present intervention, future strategy & measures within the guideline of millennium development goal.

The response was more from low resource countries and we got some very enlightening articles from various disciplines of medical fields from investigative or diagnostic procedures to management either in noninvasive way or operative procedures.

I wish we could get many more articles from all over the world and be able to appraise the readers, the present scenario. I suppose we need to get satisfied with whatever we have in hand.

I sincerely thank all the authors for their untiring dedication to research efforts and the publisher, the editorial team to bring out this special edition on Maternal and Child Health in time despite the recent earth quake devastation in Nepal.