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The impact of training on newborn care and neonatal survival in sub Saharan Africa

Emmanuel A, Fenwick J and Kain V
Griffith University, Australia

Background: Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest child mortality in the world (WHO, 2016). For instance, in 2014, UNICEF expressed concern that 1 in 11 children dies before the age of five in Sub-Saharan Africa and that one in every three neonates died on the day they were born (UNICEF, 2014).

Aim: The aim of this review was to determine the impact of training on essential newborn care and neonatal survival in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Method: A systematic review of the literature was performed by searching databases including PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, CINALH, Cochrane library and Trip. Furthermore, the World Health Organization's reproductive health library and reference checking for related articles was done. The search was limited to English language and articles published from 2007 to 2017.

Results: Nine articles were included after assessment. Findings revealed that training programs were generally different in terms of duration and implementation. There was between 8 to 400% increase in performance following test of knowledge. There was an increase in performance by 19 to 34%. The frequency of inappropriate and potentially harmful practices reduced as a result of training. Neonatal mortality reduced by 15-45% while perinatal mortality reduced by 30%.

Conclusions: Training health care workers on essential newborn care can improve newborn care and neonatal survival in Africa. However, there is need for additional evidence to support this because no study assessed the impact of training according to trainees' satisfaction with training, knowledge and skills developed and health outcome at the same time.