**Original article**

**Assessment of neonatal health profile in rural district of central India**

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Mortality is one of the basic components of population change and related data is essential for demographic studies and public health administration. Neonatal mortality in developing countries is one of the most important problems that need immediate attention in order to achieve Millennium Development Goals. About 4 million newborns die in the world every year, 90% of them in the developing world. Most of these deaths are preventable by simple interventions in the community. Care practices during delivery and neonatal period contribute to risk of mortality and morbidity.

**Objective:** The objective of this study was to find out neonatal mortalities and morbidity patterns, utilisation of health services, assessment of home based neonatal care taught to ASHA workers and evaluate newborn practices carried out by mothers in the villages of Dewas, Madhya Pradesh, India.

**Method:** The present study was conducted in 10 village of Dewas, Madhya Pradesh for period of 1 yr. Detailed information about the neonate was taken by interviewing the mother and the decision makers of the family within 30 days of birth. In case of any death of the newborn the verbal autopsy was conducted. Interviews of the ASHA workers were also conducted to assess the knowledge of the ASHA workers.

**Result:** A total of 247 neonate- mother pairs were studied. About 96% deliveries were conducted at hospital. All mothers were educated and trained by the ASHA workers regarding various newborn care practices. 86% neonates had weight more than 2.5 kg. Enquiring into breast feeding practices it was observed that 81% of the mothers exclusively breast fed their neonates. Hand washing practices was not much followed by the mothers as only 27% followed regular hand washing. 65% mothers had the knowledge of umbilical cord care. Assessment of hypothermia was known by 59% of mothers. The mother was the first person to detect the illness in 58% of babies.

**Conclusions:** Villages in Dewas displayed positive health behaviours. There was increased awareness of the mothers regarding newborn care. Through health education interventions, an attempt can be made to improve mothers and other caretaker’s skills leading to improvement of neonatal health. Thus It is important for policy-makers to consider home based neonatal care interventions as tools to improve neonatal health in rural areas.

**Keywords:** Community care, Home-based neonatal care