

Community Nursing

June 20-21, 2016 Cape Town, South Africa



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Maternal health seeking behaviour and pregnancy outcome in rural communities in Enugu State, Southeast Nigeria

Background: Antenatal clinic attendance by pregnant women and having births attended by skilled health care providers are still issues of major concern in developing countries including Nigeria. The 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey noted that only 18% of pregnant women had the first antenatal visit in the first trimester of pregnancy while 34% did not receive any antenatal care. The survey also reported a disparity between urban and rural dwellers in antenatal clinic visit in the first trimester of pregnancy (23% versus 15%). Maternal health seeking behavior during pregnancy has been seen as the way mothers take care of their health and that of the unborn child so that both remain healthy throughout pregnancy. The choice of place of antenatal care and delivery to a large extent influences pregnancy outcomes for both mother and child. Maternal health care services utilization and skilled attendance at delivery are essential for the reduction of the high morbidity and mortality rates associated with pregnancy in developing countries.

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess maternal health seeking behavior and pregnancy outcome in rural communities in Enugu state.

Methods & Materials: A cross sectional descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Validated researcher developed questionnaire and observational guide were the instruments used for data collection. Descriptive and inferential (Chi square) statistics were used to analyze data obtained from the study and level of significance was set at 0.05.

Results: A good number of the respondents 165 (79.7%) booked for antenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy. Majority of the respondents 193 (93.2%) attended antenatal care in a health facility and only 7 (3.4%) did not attend antenatal clinic in a health facility or visited a traditional birth attendant. However, the study revealed that more respondents, (52.2%) attended secondary health facilities, than the primary health facilities in the communities (35.7%). The findings also showed that out of 207 pregnant women studied, 141 (68%) had a health problem associated with their pregnancy and all of them visited a health facility for their health problems but only 42 (20.3%) visited a primary health facility for health problems associated with pregnancy. The pregnancy outcome for the mother was positive as 172 (83%) of the respondents were strong to take care of their babies after delivery while pregnancy outcome for the baby was also good, as 175 (84.5%) of the babies cried vigorously after birth though only one baby did not cry at all. The respondents social demographic characteristic (age and educational level) did not significantly influence their health seeking behavior ($p > 0.05$). However, there was a significant association ($p < 0.05$) between pregnancy outcome for baby and place of antenatal care.

Conclusion: Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that maternal health seeking behavior in the communities studied was good which resulted in positive pregnancy outcomes for most of the respondents and their babies, although primary health facilities were poorly utilized by the respondents in favour of secondary health facilities. It is therefore recommended that primary health care facilities should be strengthened and emphasized and all barriers to their use should be removed to make them more accessible to pregnant women.

Biography

Ijeoma O Ehiemere is a Professor of Nursing (Community Health) at the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. She is a Fellow of the West African College of Nursing and had previously taught in School of Nursing Bida, Niger state and School of Midwifery Ilorin, Kwara state. She became a Registered Nurse and Midwife in 1975 and 1978 respectively. She holds a BSc (Nursing Education) from the University of Ibadan, MSc (Community Health) from University of Ilorin and PhD from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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