IMPROVED SCREENING AND MANAGEMENT OF MATERNAL INFECTIONS IN GHANA: EXPERIENCE FROM BONO EAST

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Background/Purpose:
Globally, maternal infections cause 10–20 percent of 295,000 maternal and over a third of 2.4 million newborn deaths annually. Any strategy to accelerate reduction in maternal and neonatal mortality must include effective prevention and treatment of infections during pregnancy. However, antenatal infection screening and management is often unavailable, late, inconsistently or incorrectly administered, and poorly resourced.

Approach:
Working mainly at the primary health care level across five districts in Ghana, the project has implemented a multi-pronged approach that optimizes and integrates infection screening and treatment into routine antenatal care (ANC). The team is addressing multiple needs by expanding capacities of ANC providers in infection diagnosis and management and improving availability of diagnostic testing through ANC. We have also conducted community mobilization and behavior change activities to increase awareness of maternal infections and availability of screening, testing, and treatment. To improve service documentation, we deployed a mobile app enabling real-time data capture for screening, treatment, and referrals.

Outcomes/Impact:
To date, nearly 700 health care providers have been trained and >20,000 pregnant women screened, with 2,326 testing positive for at least one infection; predominantly UTIs (8.6%). HIV and syphilis test positivity rates were 0.8% and 0.7%, respectively. Prevalence of chlamydia and gonorrhea was <1%. All diagnosed patients were managed according to protocol.
Approximately 200 health promotion staff and 125 community influencers have been trained as community mobilizers. We have reached >700,000 individuals in project districts through behavior change activities including mass media, community outreach, and educational forums at markets, churches, and mosques.

Innovation and Significance:
This project provides a learning model to streamline maternal infection prevention and management with real-time data capture and monitoring capabilities.

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