



Knowledge and Attitude of Health workers on Safe Abortion Provisions in a Provincial Setting in Papua New Guinea

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Introduction

Maternal mortality and morbidity from unsafe abortion remains a challenge worldwide, particularly in developing countries such as Papua New Guinea (PNG) where abortion laws are restrictive and the nurses provide the majority of primary healthcare service.

Aims

To see if the healthcare workers were adequately aware of the revised law on abortion in the country and their perception on safe abortion provisions.

Methods

A descriptive study conducted over six month's period at a Provincial Referral Hospital in PNG.

Characteristics	Numbers	Percentage (%) or Median_(IQR)
Age	182	30 (25-40)
Gender of healthcare workers (n=204)		
Male	72	35.3
Female	132	64.7
Category of healthcare workers (n=204)		
Medical officers	32	15.7
Nurses	113	55.4
Allied healthcare workers	59	28.9
Religion (n=204)		
Christianity	189	92.6
Others	15	7.4
Years of services as healthcare worker (n=195)		
>10years	127	65.1
5-10years	47	24.1
<5years	21	10.8
Knowledge with revised abortion law (n=204)		
Adequate	57	28.0
Inadequate	147	72.0
Under what circumstances should abortion be assisted_(n=201)		
Rape cases	52	25.9
Medical reasons if mum is in danger	37	18.4
Unintended pregnancy	9	4.5
Not sure	103	51.2
Legal abortion should be permitted under any circumstances (n=204)		
Agree	48	23.5
Disagree	134	65.7
Neutral	22	10.8
Main reason for disagreement (n=134)		
Against Christianity	69	51.5
Legal repercussions	51	38.0
Culturally not accepted	10	7.5
Encourage unwanted pregnancy	4	3.0
If legalized, would you support safe abortion services?(n=148)		
Yes	56	37.8
No	92	62.2

Table 1. Socidemographic characteristics and perceptions of healthcare workers

Results

- Of the 204 healthcare workers who participated, 65% (132/204) were female healthcare workers and the majority were nurses (113/204[55.4%]). Table 1
- A significant proportion of female healthcare workers had inadequate knowledge on the revised abortion law (109/132 [82.6%] vs 23/132 [17.4%]); p< 0.001) compared to their male colleagues.
- Furthermore, despite serving for more than 10 years, a significant proportion of healthcare workers still lacked knowledge on the revised abortion law (22/127[17.3%] vs 105/127[82.7]; p<0.001). Table 2

Variables	(n)	Adequate knowledge 57	Inadequate knowledge 147	P-value
Gender of health workers interviewed				
Male	72/204	20 (27.8)	52 (72.2)	>0.99
Female	132/204	23 (17.4)	109 (82.6)	<0.001
Category of health workers (n=204)				
Medical officers	32/204	11 (34.4)	21(65.6)	0.39
Nurses	108/204	12 (11.1)	96 (88.9)	<0.001
Allied health workers	64/204	15 (23.4)	49 (76.6)	0.40
Gender of nurses_(n=108)				
Male	31	5(16.1)	26(83.9)	0.13
Female	77	12(15.6)	65(84.4)	0.002
Religion (n=204)				
Christianity	189/204	52 (27.5)	137 (72.5)	0.77
Others	15/204	4 (26.7)	11 (73.3)	>0.99
Years of services as health worker (n=195)				
>10years	127/195	22 (17.3)	105 (82.7)	<0.001
5-10years	47/195	20 (42.5)	27 (57.5)	0.02
<5years	21/195	9 (42.9)	12 (57.1)	0.13

Table 2. Knowledge level of healthcare workers on the revised abortion law

Conclusion

Healthcare workers in PNG lack adequate knowledge on revised law on safe abortion provisions. This highlights the urgent need for re-training and educating the health care workers particularly in provincial settings in PNG.