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Parent, family and career education and empowerment in reducing risks for neonatal mortality: Stretching the boundaries for neonatal units

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As overall infant and child mortality improves globally, neonatal deaths proportionately assume a larger contribution to infant and child deaths. In working towards continued improvements in neonatal mortality rates, especially in less resource constrained environments, the role of engaging parents, family members, partners, significant others and carers (subsequently referred to as parent-carers) becomes more important. They are key partners in targeted strategies for reducing the risks associated with neonatal mortality. This concept stretches the boundaries for neonatal units, in that it proposes pro-active preventative model with parent-carer co-ownership of the concept of reducing neonatal mortality for the community. In my talk I discuss these concepts using the example implementation and success of one such programme in the West Midlands. Here, parent-carer education, sharing information on regionally prevalent risk factors and associations with death in the first 28 days of life and in infancy, is impactful, has driven behavioural changes through acquisition of life-saving newer skills such as training on basic life support and coping with the choking child. This Participatory Learning and Action also affords parent-carers the confidence and knowledge on measures to reduce key risks in infancy such as the risk of sudden infant death, and how to recognize when their baby may be ill, facilitating timely access to appropriate health care services. Potentially these then empower parent-carers to work with health services pro-actively in measures to reduce the risks for neonatal mortality.

Biography

Tilly Pillay is a senior consultant neonatologist in the Staffordshire Shropshire and Black Country Operational Delivery Network (West Midlands, UK), honorary lecturer at the Universities of Leicester and Birmingham, and attached to the University of Wolverhampton, School of Medicine and Clinical Practice, Faculty of Science and Engineering. She has held clinical lead for her unit at the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust (2014-2017). Her interests are neonatal service delivery and reducing risks for neonatal mortality. She has developed and directs a parent education training package STORK and has a keen interest in parent-carer empowerment in reducing risks for mortality for current and subsequent pregnancies. She leads a national NIHR Health Service and Research Delivery Grant Opti-Prem, establishing best place of care for babies born between 27-31 weeks in England. She also runs a consultant training course for the region, supporting networking between units, and aimed at optimising care delivered at the frontline of neonatal services in local and special care neonatal units (Supporting the Sick neonate)

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