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Quality of the delivery services in health facilities in northern Ethiopia

Girmatsion Fisseha¹, Yemane Berhane², Alemayehu Worku^{2,3} and Wondwossen Terefe¹

¹Mekelle University, Ethiopia

²Addis Continental Institute of Public Health, Ethiopia

³Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Background: Substantial improvements have been observed in the coverage of and access to maternal health service, especially in skilled birth attendants, in Ethiopia. However, the quality of care has been lagging behind. Therefore, this study investigated the status of the quality of delivery services in Northern Ethiopia.

Methods: A facility based survey was conducted from December 2014 to February 2015 in Northern Ethiopia. The quality of delivery service was assessed in 32 health facilities using a facility audit checklist, by reviewing delivery, by conducting in-depth interview and observation, and by conducting exit interviews with eligible mothers. Facilities were considered as 'good quality' if they scored positively on 75% of the quality indicators set in the national guidelines for all the three components; input (materials, infrastructure, and human resource), process (adherence to standard care procedures during intrapartum and immediate postpartum periods) and output (the mothers' satisfaction and utilization of lifesaving procedures).

Result: Overall 2 of 32 (6.3%) of the study facilities fulfilled all the three quality components; input, process and output. Two of the three components were assessed as good in 11 of the 32 (34.4%) health facilities. The input quality was the better of the other quality components; which was good in 21 out of the 32 (65.6%) health facilities. The process and output quality was good in only 10 of the 32 (31.3%) facilities.

Conclusion: Only 6.3% of the studied health facilities had good quality in all three dimensions of quality measures that was done in accordance to the national delivery service guidelines. The most compromised quality component was the process. Systematic and sustained efforts need to be strengthened to improve all dimensions of quality in order to achieve the desired quality of delivery services and increase the proportion of births occurring in health facilities.

girmaf4@yahoo.com