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Missed appointments at maternal healthcare centres in Riyadh city: Reasons and associated factors

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Background: Pregnancy and childbirth related complications are a critical issue. The World Health Organization estimates that complications during this time contribute to over 300,000 deaths of women and adolescent girls worldwide each year. Ninety nine per cent of these deaths occur in women with low income in developing countries. In Saudi Arabia complications during pregnancy and childbirth are high. Twelve per cents of maternal deaths worldwide occur here. The infant mortality rate in 2014 was 7.4%, with a stillbirth rate of 12.9%. However many of these complications are thought to be preventable through better access to antenatal care. Antenatal care facilitates health workers doctors, midwives and the other obstetric technicians to detect prevent and treat pregnancy complications during pregnancy. Improved antenatal care is associated with decreased maternal mortality. However, despite antenatal care being offered in Saudi Arabia, more than 4% of women are not accessing it and presenting to the hospital for the first time whilst in labour. This increases the risk of complications.

Aims: The main aims of this research were to explore and understand the reasons and barriers behind missing appointment and not attending antenatal care among Saudi women.

Methods: Semi structured interviews were conducted with 21 Saudi Women and 9 doctors at three tertiary hospitals in Riyadh. For women, questions explored their attitudes towards antenatal care and any barriers they faced. For health care providers, questions explored their perceptions of why women do not attend antenatal care.

Results: The findings highlighted integration of social and cultural factors, such as themes as to the barriers women face in attending antenatal care. Women felt that, the transportation, poor health care system and employment condition, are the main barriers. The results also showed that women and relative's believes were barriers for women to attend. Professionals highlighted that the level of education and awareness regarded the important of antenatal care, transportation accessibility and women's believes were the barriers affecting women to take advantage from antenatal care.

Conclusion: Based on the finding of study, a number of recommendations will be made to help women around the world to overcome the barriers that were identified to them accessing antenatal care. There is no 'magic belt' to overcoming constrains, instead, a comprehensive package of social and public health care approach is required.

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