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The effect of maternal health-seeking behaviour on under-five mortality in Zimbabwe

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2012-02-29
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/11382

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Abstract

Background: This study examines the relationship between maternal health-seeking behaviour (during and after pregnancy) and under-five mortality in Zimbabwe. Maternal health-seeking behaviour affects both the mother's and child's health and has been identified as a correlate of under-five mortality. This study therefore aims to determine the extent to which maternal health-seeking behaviour prior, during and post delivery may influence the likelihood of under-five survival among Zimbabwean children.

Methods: This study is a secondary data analysis of the 2005-06 Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) dataset of children under five years old and women who had given birth in the five years preceding the survey. A multivariate logistic regression was used to examine the relationship between maternal health-seeking behaviour and under-five mortality.

Results: The results show that poor maternal health-seeking behaviour as indicated by not receiving the tetanus vaccine during pregnancy is significantly associated with under-five mortality. That is, not receiving the tetanus vaccine during pregnancy is significantly associated with increased risk of under-five mortality (p= 0.013 CI=1.11-2.53). The results also show that there is no significant association between under-five mortality and other indicators of maternal health-seeking behaviour such as antenatal care, place of delivery and assistance at delivery. However, having a preceding birth interval greater than 2 years was also found to be significantly associated with under-five mortality implying that under-five mortality declines as the length of birth interval increases.

Conclusion: Maternal health-seeking behaviour during pregnancy as reflected by maternal tetanus immunisation during pregnancy associate with under-five mortality. However, contrary to other studies that have been done elsewhere; antenatal care, place of delivery and assistance at delivery do not seem to associate with under-five mortality in Zimbabwe according to this study. The preceding birth interval is also a good predictor of under-five mortality in Zimbabwe.