

ANTENATAL HEALTH CARE UTILIZATION AMONG WOMEN WITH INCIDENCE OF UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY IN ABIA, SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Utilization of antenatal health care is an important public health issue in Nigeria. In spite of efforts towards improving under-five children health status, the incidence of under-five mortality is relatively higher in South-eastern Nigeria, especially in Abia State compared to other Southern regions. This study examined antenatal health care utilization amongst mothers with incidence of under-five mortality. Multistage and purposive sampling techniques were employed to select 301 mothers with incidence of under-five mortality. Descriptive statistics, Cross-tabulation and Chi-square tests at $p < 0.05$, and thematic content analysis were used for data analyses. The respondents' age was 32.6 ± 5.8 years and period of first Antenatal Care (ANC) was 3.5 ± 1.3 months. About 54% with under-five deaths sought ANC from private hospitals and 60.9% were attended to by nurses and midwives. Over 60% of the women did not receive information on complication signs. The use of health care centre for ANC was positively related to mother's age ($X^2=102.29$), residence ($X^2=21.04$), occupation ($X^2=112.10$), education ($X^2=119.57$) and monthly income ($X^2=62.90$). The qualitative data revealed that the additional ANC visits of rural than urban women after the fourth visit was as a result of increasing pressure from the work place, which probably might not give urban pregnant women adequate time to seek ANC. The incidence of under-five mortality was influenced by poor and non-utilization of antenatal health care facilities. Governments should embark on more enlightenment and advocacy campaigns to encourage pregnant women and nursing mothers to improve ANC health care service utilization, which is beyond obtaining ANC card.

Key words: Under-five mortality, Antenatal care and utilization in Abia, South-eastern Nigeria