



Maternal education the first step to change maternal health in Bangladesh

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Objective

Maternal Aid Association (MAA) is a student-led charity striving to bring about safe, effective, high quality maternal healthcare in resource-poor countries such as Bangladesh. MAA comprises of current King's College London medical students supported by Professor Janice Rymer, Vice President of the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Dr Daghni Rajasingham, Consultant Obstetrician at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. Maternal mortality remains a significant problem in the developing countries, accounting for over 85% of the global burden. Bangladesh has a reported maternal mortality ratio of 140-170/100,000 live births and factors suggested to contribute to the poor maternal health status include: a) poor infection control; b) hospital overcrowding; c) lack of resources; d) poor maternal education and knowledge (of what?); and e) the practice of health-risk behaviours. As the majority of maternal care and births are taking place within the community setting, MAA identified the community to be an important target. In the inaugural year MAA chose to invest in educating and improving maternal education within the community to promote positive health behaviours whilst also clarifying misconceptions. A particularly dangerous practice is the intentional calorie restriction for an easier labour period.

Methods

In summer 2016 MAA set out to Bangladesh with a team from the UK and a team from Sylhet Women's Medical College to provide a free health-camp. The camp offered an evidence-based seminar about female physiology, pregnancy and child development, and a basic health screen that included: a) blood pressure checks; b) urine screen; c) fundoscopy; d) blood glucose; and e) a final review by a qualified doctor. In order to assess if a positive impact was achieved, all patients were evaluated using a questionnaire to assess the effects of the camp on future preferred health behaviour choices.

Results

Our evaluation and results showed that the seminar was effective in improving health related behaviours. Using a scale of 1-5 to rate how likely patients were to engage in specific behaviours, after the seminar participants were more likely to: a) increase their nutritional intake during pregnancy; b) seek healthcare services; c) request help from their partners; and d) come into contact with a medical doctor.

Conclusion

We at MAA have identified the use of evidence-based seminars as an effective method of promoting positive health behaviours, whilst also being an effective method to promote understanding of maternal health to improve the health of pregnant women.