MH Scoping Review: Refining networks of care for maternal and perinatal health

Call for examples of networks of care

Background

Globally, more than 800 women died each day due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth with the majority of deaths in low- and middle-income countries in 2017. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) prioritize maternal mortality reduction, with a global average maternal mortality target of less than 70 per 100,000 live births and a supplementary national target that no country should have an MMR greater than 140 per 100,000 live births by 2030. Given the current pace of progress, it is estimated that we will fall short of the SDG target by more than 1 million lives. In 2020, a critical milestone in the SDG era, there is a need to re-assess strategies and approaches to improve maternal health and well-being, building on existing evidence and lessons learned.

WHO, in collaboration with UNFPA and UNICEF, is undertaking a scoping review for maternal and perinatal health to:

- Identify best practices on provision of integrated, people-centered maternal and perinatal care and services
- Provide guidance and recommendations on networks of care/service delivery models for countries at different stages of the obstetric transition, including benchmarks to guide achievement of Universal Health Coverage and the SDGs

The goal is to provide guidance and recommendations on how to provide maternal, perinatal, and newborn health services in countries and to support accelerating national efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Definition for networks of care

Part of the Scoping Review is to refine the concept of ‘networks of care’ for maternal and perinatal health to build consensus on terminology for how to optimally deliver maternal and perinatal health care. This effort builds on existing work in this area by Clinton Health Access Initiative and other groups.

A working definition has been proposed:

A network of care for maternal and perinatal health optimizes linkages and the deliberate coordination and governance of service delivery to provide comprehensive, respectful, people-centered maternal and perinatal care from home/community to referral levels.
Key principles of networks of care for maternal and perinatal health:

- Networks of care are not a new or parallel system but build on what already exists
- Networks of care are based on evidence-based packages of interventions, and the focus is on how to optimally provide interventions across countries at different stages of the obstetric transition
- Networks of care should operate at national scale in a sustainable fashion
- Networks of care can be comprised of networks within networks, e.g. networks of providers, networks of transportation, etc.

Key elements of networks of care for maternal and perinatal health:

- Includes both public and private service delivery sites and providers
- Is based upon respectful team-work and communication between all healthcare providers at different levels
- Focuses on formal and informal connections, collaboration and reporting between and across levels including primary and specialty care
- Addresses relational and functional aspects of the respectful provision of quality care and ensuring a positive experience of care
- Supports transport, communication (mobile, radio etc.) and other sectors that support care
- Provides a mechanism for joint accountability by health workers and with individuals and communities
- Promotes equitable access to care including reducing financial barriers
- Supports linkages with women and families including self-care\(^1\), digital technologies and telemedicine

Call for Illustrative Examples

WHO, UNFPA, and UNICEF are issuing a formal call for partners to submit examples of networks of care for maternal and perinatal health based on the working definition. These examples will provide additional information and help refine the definition and inform recommendations from the Scoping Review.

If you have an example of a network of care for maternal and perinatal health that has been implemented at a national or sub-national level, please submit the following:

Suggested format:

- 200-500 word summary addressing the following points:
  - Describe the context of maternal and perinatal health when the network of care was established including timeframe;
  - Describe the network of care, linking it to the proposed definition, and how it has been operationalized;
  - Discuss lessons learned and plans for the future.
- Include links or attachments to program documentation, including but not limited to research papers, program reports, memorandum of understanding, etc.

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\(^1\) Self-care is the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider (https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/325480/9789241550550-eng.pdf?ua=1)
How will the examples be used?

- Authors of the selected networks of care will be contacted for additional information
- Examples may be used in WHO technical documents, papers and reports with acknowledgement of authorship.

All submissions should be sent to networksofcare@who.int labelled “MHSR – Networks of Care”.
 Closing date for submission: 9 September 2020.