ABSTRACT

Knowledge and practices of doctors and nurses regarding the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV guidelines at Odi hospital, Tshwane North, South Africa.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, almost 60 million people have been infected and 25 million people have already died from HIV related causes, (WHO, 2010). Sub Saharan Africa is the region most affected with 67% of all people living with HIV worldwide and 91% of all new infections among children. Fourteen million children are already orphaned from HIV related deaths in this region. HIV can be transmitted vertically, from a pregnant mother to her child during pregnancy, birth process, or breastfeeding.

Important millennium development goals (MDG) to reduce childhood mortality and to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (UNDP) are addressed by the PMTCT program. In South Africa, the mother-to-child HIV transmission (MTCT) rate is under 4% at 4 to 8 weeks after birth since the implementation of the most recent national PMTCT programme. The PMTCT programme in South Africa has gained rapid momentum in training and practice.

This study was conducted at Odi hospital, a district hospital situated in Mabopane north of Tshwane in Gauteng province. We sought to investigate the level of knowledge and whether the doctors and nurses working at Odi were practicing the current prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV program.

There was a perceived deficiency in most practitioners working in ODI hospital regarding PMTCT and this reflected on the management of pregnant women infected with HIV. Most practitioners referred such patients to the HIV clinic even after hours, hence the need to measure this knowledge and practices and make necessary recommendations.

Aim

To assess the knowledge and practice of doctors and nurses regarding PMTCT programme in Odi hospital, Tshwane.
Methods
A descriptive cross sectional survey using self-administered questionnaires was used. The study population consisted of 31 doctors and 180 nurses. The number of practitioners who completed the study was 124 out of 211 practitioners who received questionnaires on the study date. Knowledge and practice of the PMTCT guidelines were assessed using a questionnaire developed from the current PMTCT programme guidelines. There were knowledge and practices based questions. Every correct and was scored a point and a wrong answer was scored zero. The number of correct and incorrect answers were calculated and Expressed as a percentage for each practitioner and further aggregated for different professions.

Results
There were 124 participants. There were 24(19%) doctors and 100(89%) professional nurses. There were 17(14%) males and 107(86%) females. The response rate was 59%. Fourty participants (32%) underwent further training beyond their undergraduate qualification. The mean knowledge percentage for percentage for doctors was 79% and 59% for nurses. In the knowledge questions, the question on the first step (HIV counseling and testing) scored an average 93% (highest) by participants and the doses of drugs used in the PMTCT guidelines scored 18% (lowest) by participants. In the practice questions, the score for each question ranged from 71% to 82%.

Conclusion
This study found that doctors and nurses had overall adequate self-reported knowledge and practices. However, there were deficiencies in their knowledge of drug combinations and doses.