

Descriptive analysis of gender dynamics in newborn care among nurses and physicians in the African Neonatal Network

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ABSTRACT

The extent to which gender gaps and gender dynamics may influence neonatal care is unknown. Online survey was developed including Likert scale, multiple choice and free response questions. Nurse and physician neonatal team leads at 17 hospitals in 5 countries (Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda Uganda, and Zimbabwe) that are members of the African Neonatal Network participated in a survey to assess perception of gender dynamics' influence on neonatal care teams, leadership roles and impacts on neonatal care. The majority of team leads were female; 81% nurse leads and 58.8% physician leads. Among team leads, 56% nurses and 41% physicians believed gender concerns influenced their everyday work "somewhat" or "very much". Hospital leadership's provision of leadership opportunities for neonatal team members was recognized by 69% of nurse leads and 88% of physicians leads. Several issues were recognized across disciplines to contribute to gender inequality in the workplace: disruption of training and education due to family, poor facilities for expressing milk at work, lack of elderly care, and unfair bias in allocation of senior jobs. Among team leads, 39.3% believed that hospital leadership gender and 54.5% believed political and government leaders' gender, respectively, affects their support of newborn care. Although teams recognize that hospital and societal leadership opportunities exist, ongoing assessments are needed to understand if these are realized and result in positive structural changes impacting patient care. Future initiatives in neonatal care must be developed with a gender equitable approach to ensure care providers have equal access to training, learning and leadership.

Keywords: gender gap, healthcare workforce, low-resource setting, professional development, Sub-Saharan Africa