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# Maternal and Child Health Nursing: A Review of Evidence-Based Practice

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#### **Abstract**

Maternal and child health nursing is a specified field focused on promoting the health of women and children through evidence-based practice. This study aimed to review existing evidence on maternal and child health nursing practices using secondary data sources. The researchers identified and analyzed relevant literature on topics such as prenatal care, childbirth, postpartum care, infant care, and child development. The study found that evidence-based practices in maternal and child health nursing have a positive effect on the health outcomes of women and children. Key findings included the importance of prenatal education, breastfeeding support, postpartum depression screening, and immunization adherence. The study further highlighted the need for continued research and application of evidence-based interventions in maternal and child health nursing to develop the quality of care and outcomes for women and children. Overall, the study underscores the importance of integrating evidence-based practices into maternal and child health nursing to ensure the delivery of high-quality care and improve health outcomes for mothers and children.

**Key words:** Prenatal, Maternal, Child health nursing, Infant care, Childbirth.

#### 1. Introduction

Maternal and child health nursing is a critical area of nursing exercise that focuses on promoting the health of mothers and their children from conception through adolescence (Fraser, 2016). This specialized field of nursing plays a vital role in providing comprehensive care to women and children, addressing their unique health needs, and supporting them in achieving positive health outcomes.

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Data-based practice, which integrates the best accessible study information with clinical experience and patient ideals to guide nursing care decisions, is the cornerstone of maternity and child health nursing (MacKinnon, 2015). Better health outcomes for women and children are the result of this strategy, which guarantees that nursing treatments are founded on the most recent scientific data.

This study aims to give an inclusive review of evidence-based practices in maternal and child health nursing, highlighting the current trends, challenges, and best practices in this field. By synthesizing the existing literature and research findings, this study will contribute to the advancement of understanding and practice in maternal and child well-being nursing, ultimately improving the quality of care delivered to women and children (Oweis, 2012).

The study will explore a range of topics related to maternal and child health nursing. It will examine evidence-based interventions, screening tools, assessment techniques, patient education strategies, and nursing interventions aimed at promoting positive health outcomes for mothers and children (Uneke, 2016).

This study will highlight areas for improvement, identify gaps in existing nursing practice, and make recommendations for improving the provision of care in mother and child health nursing through the examination of evidence-based practices. In summary, the goal of this research is to augment the existing knowledge in the field of maternity and child health nursing, offer significant perspectives to nursing professionals, educators, and policymakers, and eventually improve the standard of care given to mothers and children (Yoshino, 2018). It is feasible to guarantee that women and children receive the greatest care possible to support their health and well-being throughout their lives by encouraging evidence-based practice in maternity and child health nursing.

#### 2. Literature Review

The subject of this study's literature evaluation is evidence-based practice in maternity and pediatric health nursing. Because it incorporates the best available research with clinical knowledge and patient choices, evidence-based exercise in nursing is crucial for delivering high-quality care to women and children (Sethi, 2019).

Murray (2020) conducted a systematic study with an emphasis on how evidence-based guidelines are applied in maternity and child health nursing. According to the review, using clinical practice guidelines that are grounded on the best available evidence resulted in higher patient satisfaction, better health outcomes, and better quality of treatment. The researchers stressed how crucial it is for nurses to be up to date on evidence-based practices in order to give moms and babies safe, effective care.

One key aspect of evidence-based practice in maternal nursing is the emphasis on preventive care. A study by Hooker (2012) found that nurses are vital in promoting child health through education and counseling on topics such as prenatal care, breastfeeding, and child development. By providing evidence-based information and support to women and children, nurses can help prevent adverse outcomes and improve health results for both mother and kid.

A study by Borrow (2011) explored the facilitators of applying evidence-based practice in maternal and child health nursing. The researchers identified several barriers, such as lack of time, competing priorities, and resistance to change, which hindered nurses' ability to incorporate evidence-based care into their practice. However, the study also highlighted facilitators, including organizational support, access to resources, and leadership commitment, that could help overcome these challenges.

The treatment of common health issues throughout pregnancy and childhood is a significant component of evidence-based practice in maternal and child health nursing. For instance, a study conducted in 2018 by Azmoude (2018) emphasized the significance of early

detection and treatment of gestational diabetes, a frequent pregnancy problem. Evidence-based therapies such as blood glucose monitoring and dietary adjustments can help prevent negative outcomes for the mother and the unborn child.

A study conducted by Adams (2019) examined the application of evidence-based practice in maternal and child health nursing settings. The study found that nurses in these settings faced challenges in integrating evidence-based care into their practice due to time constraints, lack of knowledge, and limited access to resources. However, the study also identified strategies that could facilitate the adoption of evidence-based practice, such as ongoing education, development of clinical guidelines, and mentorship programs.

Another study by Bhutta (2013) evaluated the effect of evidence-based practice on maternal and child health outcomes. The researchers found that nurses who implemented evidence-based practices in their care delivery had better outcomes for both mothers and infants, including reduced complications during pregnancy and childbirth, lower rates of preterm birth, and improved breastfeeding rates. This study highlights the important role of evidence-based practice in improving child health results.

# 3. Methodology

This study's methodology section attempts to give a detailed explanation of the approaches utilized for data gathering, examination, and research design in order to assess the evidence-based practice guidelines in maternity and child health nursing.

## 3.1 Research Design

This study uses a systematic review methodology to assess the current evidence-based practice guidelines relevant to 'maternal and child health nursing'. A systematic review involves a comprehensive and methodical search of relevant literature, a critical appraisal of selected studies, and a synthesis of findings to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the guidelines.

# 3.2 Data Collection

The research team did a systematic search of online databases, such as 'PubMed, CINAHL, and Cochrane Library, to identify relevant studies published within the last ten years'. Inclusion criteria for the literature search were studies that investigated evidence-based practice guidelines in maternal and child health nursing. The search terms included keywords such as "maternal health," "child health," "evidence-based practice," and "nursing."

# 3.3 Data Analysis

After selecting relevant studies, the research team conducted a thematic analysis of the findings to identify common themes and key recommendations for 'maternal and child health' nursing practice. The analysis involved summarizing and synthesizing the evidence from the selected studies to evaluate the efficiency of the guidelines in improving 'maternal and child health' outcomes.

## 3.4 Limitations

The limitations included the possibility of publication bias, incomplete or outdated evidence in the selected studies, and the inherent challenges in synthesizing findings from diverse sources. These limitations may impact the generalizability and reliability of the results but can be mitigated through a rigorous and transparent methodological approach.

In general, the methodology used in this study provides a systematic and evidence-based evaluation of the current guidelines in 'maternal and child health' nursing. By employing a rigorous research design, comprehensive data collection, and robust data analysis

methods, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of 'maternal and child health' nursing practice and inform future research and policy initiatives.

## 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Maternal Health

## 4.1.1 Importance of Prenatal Care

To susstain the health of both the mother and the fetus throughout pregnancy, prenatal care is essential. According to Koota's (2018) review study, women who regularly attended prenatal care appointments had a higher likelihood of experiencing favorable maternal health outcomes, such as a lower risk of problems during pregnancy and labor. Studies have demonstrated how early and consistent prenatal care can improve the health of both mothers and their unborn children (Necochea, 2015). Our research highlights how crucial it is for medical professionals to stress the value of prenatal care and make sure expectant mothers have timely access to all necessary prenatal services.

## 4.1.2 Maternal Nutrition and Health Promotion

Proper maternal diet and health promotion are key components of ensuring a healthy pregnancy. The review identified that women who adhered to a balanced and nutritious diet during pregnancy had lower rates of pregnancy-related complications and better birth outcomes (Turenne, 2016). This is evidenced by existing literature that highlights the positive influence of maternal nutrition on maternal and fetal health (Yoshino, 2018). Healthcare providers should continue to educate pregnant women on the importance of maintaining a healthy diet, taking prenatal vitamins, and engaging in regular physical activity to support optimal maternal and fetal health outcomes.

## 4.1.3 Complications in Pregnancy

Complications in pregnancy are a significant concern that can impact maternal and fetal health. The review study identified several common complications, including gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, and preterm birth, which were associated with adverse maternal and infant outcomes (Turenne, 2016). This is evident in previous research that has highlighted the detrimental effects of pregnancy-related complications on maternal and infant health (Oweis, 2012). Healthcare providers must be vigilant in monitoring pregnant women for potential complications and providing appropriate interventions to mitigate risks and optimize outcomes for both mother and baby.

# 4.1.4 Postpartum Care and Support

Postpartum care and support are essential components of ensuring maternal well-being following childbirth. The review found that women who received adequate postpartum care and support were more likely to experience a smoother recovery and have better mental health outcomes (Monsen, 2017). This emphasizes the significance of ongoing support for new mothers during the postpartum period, including access to healthcare services, breastfeeding support, and mental health resources. Previous studies have highlighted the benefits of comprehensive postpartum care in improving maternal health and reducing the risk of postpartum complications (Hooker, 2012). Healthcare providers should prioritize postpartum care to guarantee that new mothers get the upkeep they need to transition successfully into motherhood.

# 4.2 Child Health

# 4.2.1 Newborn Care and Assessment

In this study, it was observed that a significant proportion of mothers lacked knowledge regarding essential newborn care practices such as umbilical cord care and early commencement of breastfeeding (Bhutta, 2013). This lack of knowledge may lead to

suboptimal care practices and potentially contribute to adverse health outcomes in newborns. Previous studies have also highlighted similar gaps in maternal knowledge and the need for targeted education interventions to improve newborn care practices (Adams, 2019).

#### 4.2.2 Infant and Child Nutrition

The study revealed that a substantial number of caregivers had misconceptions about infant and child nutrition, including the timing of introducing complementary foods, appropriate food consistency, and portion sizes (Azmoude, 2018). These misconceptions can impact the dietetic status of children and increase the risk of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Interventions focusing on improving caregivers' knowledge and understanding of optimal nutrition practices are crucial for promoting healthy development in children (Black, 2017).

# 4.2.3 Growth and Developmental Milestones

Many caregivers in the findings of the review study were unable to accurately identify key developmental milestones in infants and children, such as rolling over, sitting, and walking. Delayed recognition of developmental delays may lead to missed opportunities for early intervention and support, potentially impacting long-term outcomes (Fraser, 2016). Educating caregivers about the importance of monitoring and promoting developmental milestones is essential to ensure the timely identification of any delays and facilitate early intervention.

# 4.2.4 Common Pediatric Illnesses and Injuries

The study findings also highlighted gaps in caregivers' knowledge of common pediatric illnesses and injuries, such as fever management, signs of dehydration, and first aid for minor injuries. Inadequate knowledge in these areas can delay appropriate care-seeking behaviors and worsen health outcomes for children (Koota, 2018). Effective caregiver education on recognizing symptoms, seeking timely medical attention, and implementing basic first aid measures is crucial in improving child health outcomes and reducing morbidity and mortality.

## 4.3 Family-Centered Care

## 4.3.1 Partnering with Families in Care Decisions

The study findings revealed that partnering with families in care decisions is crucial in maternal and child health nursing. Involving families in care decisions empowers them to actively participate in the health care journey of the child, leading to improved health outcomes (Murray, 2020). For example, involving parents in the development of the child's care plan can enhance their understanding of the child's condition and treatment options, thus promoting adherence to the care plan.

Studies have supported the significance of family-centered care in maternal and child health. Research by Rohan (2017) highlighted the positive impact of involving families in care decisions on patient satisfaction and health outcomes. This study further underscores the need for nurses to collaborate with families to ensure that care decisions are made in the best interest of the child.

# 4.3.2 Cultural Competence in Maternal and Child Health Nursing

To provide care for a variety of populations, maternity and child health nurses must be culturally competent. The findings of the investigation showed that nurses with cultural competence are better able to recognize and respond to the particular needs of families from various cultural backgrounds (Uneke, 2016). For instance, nurses can provide culturally sensitive care to families during the prenatal period by having knowledge of cultural customs around birthing.

Yoshino (2018) emphasized the importance of cultural competence in nursing practice and its role in promoting patient-centered care. This study found that culturally competent nurses are better able to establish trust and rapport with families from diverse cultural backgrounds, leading to improved patient outcomes.

## 4.3.3 Addressing Social Determinants of Health in Pediatric Care

To achieve the best possible health results for children, the study's findings made clear how crucial it is to address social determinants of health in pediatric treatment. Children's health and well-being can be greatly impacted by social variables such as living conditions, socioeconomic status, and access to healthcare (Uneke, 2016). Children from low-income households, for instance, can encounter difficulties getting access to healthcare services, which could result in lost chances for preventative treatment and early intervention.

Sethi (2019) has shown that addressing social factors of wellbeing in pediatric care is essential for reducing health inequities among children. This study demonstrated that interventions aimed at addressing social determinants, such as providing access to affordable healthcare and support services, can lead to improved health outcomes for children.

## 4.4 Nursing Interventions and Best Practices

# 4.4.1 Evidence-Based Nursing Interventions in Maternal and Child Health

Evidence-based nursing interventions are vital in supporting the comfort of mothers and children. The review found that interventions such as prenatal education, breastfeeding support, postpartum depression screening, and vaccination promotion were effective in refining maternal and child health results (Oweis, 2012). For example, prenatal education programs that provide information on healthy pregnancy practices, nutrition, and prenatal care have been shown to decrease the danger of preterm birth.

Additionally, breastfeeding support interventions, including lactation counseling and education, can improve breastfeeding rates and duration, leading to better health outcomes for both mothers and babies. Postnatal depression screening and interventions can help identify and support women experiencing postpartum depression, reducing the negative impact on maternal mental health and parenting behaviors (Murray, 2020).

Furthermore, vaccination promotion interventions, such as educating parents about the importance of childhood immunizations and addressing vaccine hesitancy, are critical in preventing infectious diseases and promoting herd immunity. By implementing evidence-based nursing interventions in maternal and child health, nurses can contribute to reducing maternal and child mortality rates and promoting healthy development (MacKinnon, 2015).

# 4.4.2 The Role of the Nurse in Promoting Maternal and Child Health

Nurses are vital in promoting maternal and child health through their expertise in providing holistic care, health education, support, and advocacy (Hooker, 2012). As frontline healthcare providers, nurses have a unique opportunity to work closely with women and children to address their health needs and authorize them to make knowledgeable decisions about their healthcare.

The review observed that nurses played key roles in implementing evidence-based interventions, such as prenatal education, breastfeeding support, and vaccination promotion (Fraser, 2016). Nurses provided individualized care to pregnant women, new mothers, and children, conducting assessments, offering education, and supporting them through the challenges of pregnancy, childbirth, and early childhood.

In addition, nurses supported access to healthcare services, supported policies that supported the health of mothers and children, and worked with interdisciplinary teams to deliver comprehensive care as advocates for mother and child health (Borrow, 2011). Additionally, social determinants of health—such as poverty, access to healthcare, and

cultural beliefs—that affect the well-being of mothers and children were also greatly impacted by the work that nurses did. Nurses can significantly improve maternal and child health outcomes, encourage healthy behaviors, and increase health equality for disadvantaged populations by utilizing their knowledge, compassion, and communication skills.

# 4.4.3 Implementing Quality Improvement Strategies in Maternal and Child Health Nursing

Quality improvement strategies are essential in ensuring that maternal and child health nursing practices are evidence-based, efficient, and patient-centered (Adams, 2019). The article identified several key quality improvement strategies that can enhance the delivery of care in maternal and child health settings.

One important improvement strategy is the use of standardized protocols and plans for maternal and child health care. By following evidence-based guidelines for prenatal care and child health screenings, nurses can ensure that care is consistent, safe, and effective. Standardized protocols can also help to reduce variations in care and improve health outcomes for mothers and children (Azmoude, 2018).

Another quality improvement strategy is the implementation of electronic health records (EHRs) in maternal and child health settings (Aderemi, 2016). EHRs can streamline documentation, enhance communication among healthcare providers, and facilitate the tracking of patient outcomes. By using EHRs to collect and analyze data on maternal and child health outcomes, nurses can identify areas for improvement, monitor trends in health indicators, and guide decision-making to optimize care delivery (Black, 2017).

Additionally, quality improvement strategies such as performance improvement initiatives, interprofessional collaborations, and continuous education and training can add to enhancing the quality of care in child health nursing. By integrating these strategies into practice, nurses can promote continuous learning, innovation, and excellence in maternal care (Bhutta, 2013).

# 4.5 Challenges and Future Directions

# 4.5.1 Ethical Considerations in Maternal and Child Health Nursing

Ethical considerations are paramount in the areas of 'maternal and child health' nursing. One of the key ethical issues is informed consent, especially when dealing with susceptible people such as expectant ladies and newborns (Gilmore, 2013). Nurses need to ensure that patients fully know the dangers and advantages of interventions and that their autonomy is respected in decision-making processes.

Additionally, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of patient information is essential in protecting the rights of maternal and child health patients. This is particularly important when sensitive issues such as pregnancy complications or abuse are involved (Koota, 2018). Nurses must adhere to strict confidentiality guidelines to maintain trust and respect the dignity of their patients.

Furthermore, the ethical dilemma of resource allocation may arise in maternal and child health nursing. Nurses must navigate difficult decisions related to the distribution of limited resources, such as neonatal intensive care unit beds or vaccines, in order to optimize outcomes for the greatest number of patients while adhering to ethical principles of justice and fairness (Monsen, 2017).

# 4.5.2 Addressing Disparities in Maternal and Child Health Outcomes

There are still gaps in the health of mothers and children, with marginalized groups being disproportionately impacted by greater rates of newborn and mother death as well as other unfavorable health outcomes (Necochea, 2015). In order to overcome these gaps, nurses must provide culturally appropriate care, advocate for patients, and provide education.

Community-based interventions that focus on socioeconomic status, housing, healthcare access, and education are some strategies for addressing health disparities. In order to improve health equality and lessen disparities in mother and child health outcomes, nurses can collaborate with community organizations and public health authorities (Rohan, 2017).

In addition, reducing inequities requires broadening diversity and representation in the nursing profession, particularly in maternity and child health (Turenne, 2016). Healthcare companies can enhance the quality of care they give to diverse patient groups by hiring and retaining a workforce that is representative of the communities they serve and is sensitive to cultural differences. Furthermore, initiatives to support health literacy and education among expectant moms and new mothers can enable people to make decisions about their own and their children's health that are well-informed (Ward, 2015). Providing evidence-based information, tools, and support to enhance health outcomes and lessen inequalities in mother and child health can be a major responsibility for nurses.

## 4.5.3 Advancements in Maternal and Child Health Nursing Research

Clinical practice and policy development have all significantly improved as a result of advances in maternity and child health nursing research. Numerous subjects have been the subject of research studies, including postpartum support, breastfeeding assistance, neonatal care, labor and delivery, and prenatal care (Sethi, 2019). For instance, studies have looked at how nursing success and mother-child attachment are affected by skin-to-skin contact just after delivery. Research has indicated that early skin-to-skin contact can improve maternal-infant attachment and boost breastfeeding success rates, which will benefit the mother's and the child's health (Murray, 2020).

Advancements in technology have also enhanced 'maternal and child health' nursing practice with the development of telehealth services, mobile health applications, and remote monitoring devices. These innovations have expanded access to care for new mothers, particularly in underserved and rural communities, and have improved communication between healthcare providers and patients (Koota, 2018).

Moreover, research studies have highlighted the importance of evidence-based practice in maternal and child health nursing, emphasizing the use of best practices and the integration of research findings into clinical decision-making (Fraser, 2016). Nurses must stay current with the latest research and guidelines to provide high-quality care to women and children and contribute to improved health outcomes.

# 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, maternal and child health nursing is a vital area of nursing practice that is crucial in promoting the well-being of women and children. Evidence-based practice in maternal and child health nursing is essential to ensure that nursing care is based on the best available evidence and is aligned with current best practices. This review has highlighted various aspects of evidence-based practice in maternal and child well-being nursing, including the importance of accurate assessment, effective communication, and the use of interventions that are supported by strong evidence.

By utilizing evidence-based practice in maternal and child health nursing, nurses can provide high-quality care that is safe, effective, and patient-centered. It is essential for nurses working in this area to continuously update their knowledge and skills, stay informed about the latest research and best practices, and collaborate with other healthcare providers to optimize patient results. Through the application of evidence-based practice, nurses can make a significant impact on maternal and child health and add to the general health of women and children.

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