

Abstract #27 (0346_0513_000036)

A POLICY REVIEW OF REFERRAL SYSTEMS FOR CHILD HEALTH IN UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

Lise Hamilton, University of Manitoba; **Gaurav Kapoor**, India Health Action Trust; **Kanchan Srivastava**, India Health Action Trust; **Lorine Pelly**, University of Manitoba; **Maryanne Crockett**, University of Manitoba

Background:

1.2 million under-five children died in India in 2017, with Uttar Pradesh state having one of the highest and most inequitably distributed under-five mortality rates. Strengthening referral systems is a key strategy in improving under-five health outcomes.

Objective:

The study objective was to investigate the policy framework for referral and how referral systems are operationalized for child health in Uttar Pradesh.

Methods:

We conducted a policy review of publicly available English and Hindi documents regarding referral at the state- and national-level and searched PubMed, MEDLINE and the WHO with specific search criteria. The research team read all potentially relevant documents and reached consensus on inclusion. Included documents were coded and clustered by theme for analysis.

Results:

We scanned 1133 documents and included 93 documents for analysis. Preliminary analysis suggests there is no cohesive or thorough policy framework for referral. Of the codes for referral system components, there was more frequent discussion of the community to facility pathway and transportation services. Of the 93 documents, only three documents had specific formats or instructions on how health providers should conduct the referral process. There were few references to follow-up and two-way communication between facilities and providers, specific documentation, intra-facility transfers or facility procedures for recognizing, accepting and following up with referred cases.

Conclusion:

Preliminary results demonstrate a lack of clear referral policies on which to base referral strengthening. A strategy for moving through the levels of the public health system was articulated but there were few specifics on how this should be done. The next step is to work with the Government of Uttar Pradesh to develop clear policies and guidelines for the operationalization of referral processes in the state. This will lay the foundation for improved outcomes for sick newborns and young children as they move through the health care system.