

## **Women’s health through the ages from myths and taboos to awareness and role of community health workers in maternal and neonatal care in urban and rural areas of Pakistan**

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**G**lobally, 2.4 million children died in the first month of life in 2020 – approximately 6,500 neonatal deaths every day 1. National mortality rate in Pakistan in 2020 is still 40.4 deaths per 1000 live births<sup>2</sup>. Pakistan also has a quite high maternal mortality rate of 140 per 100,000 live births<sup>3</sup>. The ratio is also 26pc higher in rural areas - 199 deaths, than urban areas - 158 deaths. 4 Community health workers, especially in rural areas, can play a significant role in decreasing neonatal and maternal mortality<sup>5,6,7</sup>, by educating the people about the causation, as well as ensuring safe birth practices. The objectives of our study are to analyse the level of knowledge, and practices of mothers about neonatal care and to assess the contribution of community health workers in promoting the knowledge and care for neonates. It is an on-going research. A cross-sectional study is being conducted among the mothers of neonates (a child below the age of 28 days) of District Headquarters Hospital, Rawalpindi also among the health workers of tribal districts of Waziristan. We have used USAID Questionnaire Assessment of Community Health Workers to Prevent Neonatal Mortality as the data collection tool. After literature review we came to know that in developing countries like Pakistan, where there are an estimated 0.82 physicians, 0.57 nurses and midwives, and 0.06 community health workers per 1000 population, the health care system

can be improved and neonatal mortality decreased by training and supervising the community health workers. Brazil improved its public health system by focusing on community awareness. According to our research, 70-80% mothers responded that community health workers do not conduct workshops in their districts about breastfeeding practices, about maternal diet and health, about family planning, about basic neonatal care etc. When we will break the taboo to talk openly about maternal health, maternal mortality rate and neonatal mortality rate will decrease significantly. Women’s health has been neglected over the years with the uterus being called from the word “hysteria”, with the woman labelled witches and neglected medical opportunities. It has gone a long way from myths to awareness. But still there is a long way to go to overcome the burdens of the deaths of our mothers and neonates.

### **Biography**

Sumia Fatima is an avid researcher and has presented earlier at conferences of 90th Catholic Medical Association, Orlando, in Paris and Turkey. Currently got her researches accepted for Zurich, Switzerland and Athens, Greece. But she specifically wanted to attend this conference because neonatology is very close to her heart and she wants to make a contribution so every child born in this world is given optimum care and love.

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