

Facilitators Of And Barriers To Prenatal Care Services In Primary Healthcare Facilities During The COVID-19 Pandemic In Manila, Philippines: A Qualitative Study

Meneses, Paul Darrel¹; Dino, Angelica Bianca¹; Mendez, Katrine Zeta¹; Mendoza, Kimberly¹; Molina, Mary Jane¹; Miranda, Kevin Jace¹; Carandang, Rogie Royce^{1,2}

¹ *College of Pharmacy, Adamson University, Manila, Metro Manila, 1000, Philippines*

² *Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Farmington, CT 06030, USA*

paul.darrel.meneses@adamson.edu.ph

Topic: *Pharmacy practice/Clinical Practice*

Abstract

Introduction: Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the healthcare system, notably the provision of public health services. There is a lack of unified local frameworks on the strategies and methods of implementation in maintaining maternal and child health (MCH) services during the pandemic within primary healthcare facilities in the Philippines.

Objective: This study aimed to (1) identify the barriers and facilitators experienced by pregnant women in accessing prenatal care services in primary healthcare facilities during the pandemic; and (2) explore the healthcare providers' implementation of MCH services.

Methods: A facility-based qualitative study was conducted within six legislative districts of Manila City. Focus group discussions among pregnant women (n = 6) and healthcare providers (n = 6) were conducted in primary healthcare facilities. Transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis and MAXQDA was used to code and manage the data.

Results: Twenty-two pregnant women and 21 healthcare providers were interviewed using a semi-structured topic guide focusing on the perception and adherence of pregnant women in receiving prenatal care. Five themes emerged that are related to barriers and facilitators: (1) fear of the unknown, (2) financial issues, (3) lifestyle factors, (4) clinical experiences, and (5) health literacy. While most pregnant women were satisfied with their prenatal services, they experienced a lack of compassion from the healthcare providers, an unsatisfactory environment due to the facilities' secluded location and outdated interior, and insufficient services.

Conclusions: Facilitators in ensuring the successful delivery of prenatal care services should be maintained, while the identified barriers should serve as a call to improve the quality of prenatal services. Addressing the barriers requires a multi-sectoral approach, and primary healthcare facilities are encouraged to adopt effective MCH strategies and practices that will help them thrive during a crisis.

Keywords: facilitators and barriers, maternal health, pregnant women, prenatal care services, primary healthcare facilities.