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SUMMARY

An adequate and proper ante natal care is the key to prevent maternal and perinatal mortality. Efficient and effective management of maternal and child health programmes based on measurements of individual and community risks will help the rational distribution of existing resources. The objective of the study was to evaluate the care seekers attending the ANC at G.H. Anuradhapura and to identify the factors affecting the effective use of this centre as a referral clinic. The study was conducted from 27th June to 22nd July 1994.

The main study was carried out at the ANC in G.H. Anuradhapura. A part of the study was carried out in selected ANC at PHC level to identify the factors at PHC level which will strengthen the ANC at G.H. Anuradhapura as a referral clinic.

The study sample consisted of the care seekers attending the ANC at G.H. Anuradhapura on three or more occasions and pregnant mothers with a minimum period of gestation of 36 weeks attending the selected PHC level in the district of Anuradhapura.

The main instrument was structured pre-coded questionnaires. Part of the information was collected by the principal investigator by observations. The result revealed that almost equal proportions of self-referrals who by-passed the PHC level institutions and referrals from other sources attended the ANC at G.H. Anuradhapura.

Although the close proximity of G.H. Anuradhapura was the main reason cited by the self-referrals for utilisation of this clinic, the actual reason is likely to be the unawareness of the PHC facility or the preference to the General Hospital. Only one third of self-referrals were identified as having a risk condition.

A lapse on the part of the local PHM in identifying the risk conditions and directing the care seekers to the proper level of care may have led to this situation. Half of the referrals did not have any risk conditions. This may be due to the absence of uniformity in applying the criteria of the "risk" or ignorance of the health staff.

As opposed to the referrals, self-referrals had a higher proportion in the "non-risk" age group, "non-risk" parity, higher level of education and higher income group.

This study reveals that correct advice and direction by PHM on the appropriate source for ante natal care and satisfactory quality of care provided at the PHC level clinics could strengthen the ANC at G.H. Anuradhapura as a referral centre, thereby, fully utilizing all available facilities at the PHC level and at the secondary care level.

Introduction of a functional referral system and creating awareness in the community will enhance the efficient utilization of available resources.