

Impact of COVID-19 on Antenatal Care Provision at Public Hospitals in Ethiopia: A Mixed Method Study

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Abstract : Introduction: The pandemic overstretched the weak health systems in developing countries, including Ethiopia. This study aims to assess and explore the effect of COVID-19 on antenatal care (ANC) provision. Methods: A concurrent mixed methods study was applied. An interrupted time series design was applied for the quantitative study, and in-depth interviews were implemented for the qualitative research to explore maternity care providers' perceptions of ANC provision during COVID-19. We used routine monthly collected data from the health management information system (HMIS) in fifteen hospitals in the Sidama region, Ethiopia, from March 2019 to February 2020 (12 months) before COVID-19 and from March to August 2020 (6 months) during COVID-19. We imported data into STATA V.17 for analysis. ANC provision's mean monthly incidence rate ratio (IRR) was calculated using Poisson regression with a 95% confidence interval. The qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings from quantitative and qualitative elements were integrated with a contiguous approach. Results: Our findings indicate the rate of ANC provision significantly decreased in the first six months of COVID-19. This study has three identified main themes: barriers to ANC provision, inadequate COVID-19 prevention approach, and delay in providing ANC. Conclusion and recommendation: Based on our findings, the pandemic affected ANC provision in the study area. The health bureau and stakeholders should take a novel and sustainable approach to prevent future pandemics. The health bureau and hospital administrators should establish a task force that relies on financial self-reliance to close gaps in future pandemics of medical supply shortages. Pregnant women should receive their care promptly from maternity care providers. In order to foster contact and avoid discrimination the future pandemics, hospital administrators should set up a platform for community members and maternity care providers.

Keywords : ANC provision, COVID-19, mixed methods study, Ethiopia

Conference Title : ICOGRSWH 2023 : International Conference on Obstetrics, Gynecology, Reproductive Sciences and Women Healthcare

Conference Location : Sydney, Australia

Conference Dates : August 24-25, 2023