

9

DELAY MEANS DEATH

SESSION 9

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Aims

- To enable students to understand that delay can occur in many different places and for different reasons:
 - that delay can cause death or result in morbidity
 - that delay can be prevented, and
 - that addressing this issue will help reduce maternal deaths and promote safe motherhood.

Objectives

On completion of Session 9, students will be able to:

- Describe the three phases of delay which can occur in the process of seeking medical/midwifery care.
- Identify the factors which influence delay.
- Identify the actions that should be taken to prevent delay.

Plan

Lecture, story telling and/or role play (1 hour).

Group work (1 hour).

Resources

Instructions for students.

INTRODUCTION

It is extremely important for students to realize that delay in a woman and/or her newborn receiving appropriate care if a complication occurs either in pregnancy, during birth or the postnatal period is dangerous. Introduce the subject giving practical examples from your own experience, whenever possible.

Delay in receiving appropriate and adequate care can occur at different times and for different reasons. Whenever there is delay and for whatever reason, delay is dangerous because delay can cause death.

Consider whether delay could happen in your community. If so, decide what can be done about it in order to:

- *avoid delay*
- *prevent death*
- *promote safe motherhood.*

THE PHASES OF DELAY

Delay in receiving care has been described in three phases (sometimes called the three delays):

- Phase 1. Decision to seek care
- Phase 2. Reaching the medical facility
- Phase 3. Receiving adequate treatment.

Phase 1. Delay in decision to seek care

This is affected by:

- Economic status
- Educational status
- Women's status
- Illness characteristics.

Suggested questions that will help during discussion of important issues:

- Do people use health care facilities as often as they should?
- Who uses the health facilities most? Why?
- What prevents utilization?
- Who makes the decision to seek care?
- Does this sometimes cause delay?
- Does the status of women in the community prevent them from making decisions?

Phase 2. Delay in reaching the medical facility

This is affected by:

- Distance
- Transport
- Roads
- Cost.

The following will help during discussion of the important issues in Phase 2:

- How far do women have to travel to seek care?
- How do they get there?
- What is the cost?
- Who pays?

Phase 3. Delay in receiving adequate treatment

The following questions will help during discussion of this phase:

- What quality of care can women expect at health facilities?
- Is there always the right kind of help available?

The right kind of help means:

- Skilled staff
- Drugs
- Sterile equipment, and
- Blood for transfusion.

What other right kind of help can students suggest?

How phases of delay combine

Recall the story of Mrs X.

What were the phases of delay for her receiving treatment?

- There was delay in seeking care, because she did not realize she had a life threatening condition (placenta praevia)
- There was delay in reaching the hospital (she lived in a remote village and the journey took 4 hours)
- There was delay even when she reached hospital (it was 3 hours after admission before she had surgery).

Ask the students which of the following factors influenced delay in the treatment of Mrs X:

- Economic status
- Educational status
- Women's status

- Illness characteristics (she was undernourished, anaemic, had parasitic infestations)
- Distance
- Transport, roads
- Cost
- Quality of care.

All of these factors contributed to delay in the treatment of Mrs X.

THE STORY OF MRS Y

Share this true story of Mrs Y with the students.

Students may present this story through role play or story telling.

Why did Mrs Y die?

Mrs Y died while giving birth. It was her fifth delivery. She was not from a far off village but lived in the city itself. She set out on time to go to hospital. But, ...

... by the time they had found a vehicle to go to the hospital,

... by the time they struggled to get her an admission card,

... by the time she was admitted,

... by the time her file was made up,

... by the time the midwife was called,

... by the time the midwife finished eating,

... by the time the midwife came,

... by the time the husband went and bought some gloves,

... by the time the midwife examined the woman,

... by the time the bleeding started,

... by the time the doctor was called,

... by the time the doctor could be found,

... by the time the ambulance went to find the doctor,

... by the time the doctor came,

... by the time the husband went to buy drugs, IV set, and drip,

... by the time the husband went out to look for blood bags all round the city,

... by the time the husband found one,

... by the time the husband begged the pharmacist to reduce the prices since he had already spent all his money on swabs, dressings, drugs and fluids,

... by the time the haematologist was called,

... by the time the haematologist came and took blood from the exhausted husband,

... by the time the day and night nurses changed duty,

... by the time the midwife came again,

... by the time the doctor was called,

... by the time the doctor could be found,

... by the time the doctor came,

... the woman died!

GROUP WORK

After the story telling and/or role play, divide the students into groups so that they may discuss the issues outlined in the Instructions for Students provided at the end of the session.

Feedback

During feedback, make sure the following issues are addressed.

1. Factors influencing the delays could include:

- transport*
- bureaucracy makes filling in forms and getting procedures right more important than the people who need help*
- procedures/routines (e.g. admission) are useful, but not when they get in the way of giving prompt attention*
- availability of staff (if on duty/on call, where are they, and how can they be contacted/come quickly)*
- lack of a sense of urgency (midwife/doctor/laboratory staff)*

- *lack of supplies/equipment (husband had to get these and could not afford them)*
 - *laboratory services*
 - *duty changing time.*
2. *Students may well conclude that Mrs Y could also have died in their local hospital from similar causes, and that delay would have been the main problem.*
 3. *Encourage practical and realistic ideas. Use the blackboard or flipchart and make two columns as illustrated below, or divide into small groups and discuss.*

Write down the causes and actions which you all agree.

Cause of delay: e.g. admission procedure too long and complicated	Action to prevent delay: e.g. modify procedure for emergency admission
First delay:	
Second delay:	
Third delay:	

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Why did Mrs Y die?

1. Identify the factors which influenced the delay in Mrs Y receiving the treatment she needed.
2. Which of these factors could have occurred here in our hospital/facility?
3. What action needs to be taken to prevent another Mrs Y from dying?