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Research Summary

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Title The outcome of low birth weight babies in Vanuatu: A prospective study

Abstract

Introduction: Low birth babies are a fragile cohort of babies. It is estimated that more than 20 million newborns annually are low birth weight infants. A low birth weight baby is a significant public health indicator of maternal health, nutrition, healthcare delivery and poverty. In high income countries, medical technology has immensely helped in the increased survival of lower and lower birth weights. In Vanuatu, improving their outcomes and survival still remains a huge health challenge.

Aim: To document early follow up outcomes of low birth weight babies admitted to Special Care Nursery of Vila Central Hospital and Northern Provincial Hospital as well as to explore how preterm delivery and caring for a low birth weight baby has an impact on a mother's mental, social and physical wellbeing.

Method: This was a descriptive prospective study that recruited babies admitted to special care nursery with a weight less than 2.5kg. Babies were followed up over a period of 12 months. Anthropometry measurements were recorded, assessment of developmental milestones, immunization statuses, and screening for complications were done. Interviews with the mothers about their wellbeing prior to discharge was carried out as well and documented.

Results: A total of 48 patients were recruited. 4 babies died post discharge. 7 babies were lost to follow up. 41 babies were followed up until 1 year of age. All recruits gained good weight in the first six months of life and had a slower progression in weight in the second half of their first year of life. (*RESULTS STILL BEING ANALYZED)

Conclusion: This study has outline the outcomes of low birth weight babies and highlighted issues of concern upon their discharge from hospital. It is vital that these special group of babies are followed up well after discharge and the importance of regular follow up is stressed to their parents as well.