

HEALTH SERVICES FOR PNG MUMS AND BABIES:



Focus of new HMHB study



The rate of maternal and newborn death in Papua New Guinea is staggeringly high. Each year more than 5,000 newborns perish in the first month of life. A mother in PNG is 80 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than a mother in Australia.

Burnet's Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies (HMHB) collaborative research program is aimed at improving life-saving health care for women and children. In partnership with the PNG Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR), national stakeholders and the East New Britain Provincial Health Office, Burnet's researchers have commenced the Health Services for Postnatal and Infancy Care study. Weaknesses in health care services, on top of the extra illness burden suffered by mothers and babies, contribute to the unacceptably high rates of death and disease seen in PNG. This study focuses on services for the mother and baby during first month of life (postnatal period), and through the first 12 months (infancy).

Burnet Institute's Dr Chris Morgan, one of the lead investigators on HMHB, is joined by Mr Nicholas Larme, Acting Deputy Provincial Administrator in ENB,

and Ms Olga (Nelly) Saweri, Senior Scientific Officer at PNGIMR, as the Principal Investigators of the study.

"This study will survey the five busiest health facilities providing postnatal care in ENB, and a selected group of smaller clinics and outreach points that are served by these facilities," Dr Morgan said.

"Our research aims to examine the delivery of health services in the first weeks after birth, when mother and baby are most vulnerable, and then through the first year when the babies undergo their most critical growth, and the mother is most in need of reproductive health care. There is a critical need, to find new ways to make these services more accessible and affordable for communities in PNG."

East New Britain is an ideal site to study such services because, despite investment by the provincial government, many families are missing out on effective infancy care. Participating clinics, hospitals and partners are likely to welcome new ideas on service delivery.

"Working in close collaboration with HMHB research partners, and local decision-makers, is crucial to effective health systems analysis." Dr Morgan said.

East New Britain is also the location of the first HMHB study, which examines the views of women and has helped pinpoint particular service needs or gaps. We are building on close relationships with the provincial and non-government health authorities, noting their willingness to examine the performance of their services – and their key role in improving them.

The Health Services for Postnatal and Infancy Care study will:

- Measure infrastructure, equipment and supplies for postnatal and infancy care
- Assess what health workers know, think and do in relation to providing postnatal and infancy services
- Assess health workers' ideas for improvement, and response to changes brought in during 2015 by the national government
- Compare the findings to national policy and good ideas from other countries to identify immediate and medium-term opportunities for improved care.

The study team is grateful to the private donations and sponsorship that make such locally-directed research possible, as well as to the partner institutions, who all commit some of their internal resources.

PARTNERS:



PRINCIPAL SUPPORTER:

