

IMPORTANCE OF ANTENATAL SCREENING TO REDUCE THE INFECTION RELATED NEONATAL MORTALITY RATES

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Group B Streptococcus agalactiae is one of the major pathogen responsible for neonatal sepsis and meningitis. It is the normal commensal of birth canal and hence can easily be the source of infection for the neonate, while passage through the birth canal.

The prevalence of neonatal sepsis and bacterial meningitis due to invasive group B streptococcal (GBS) infection is about 15% in neonatal age group (<01 months)¹. This results in high morbidity and mortality rates²⁻⁴. The maternal predisposing factors include; preterm birth (<37 weeks' gestation), premature rupture of membranes, septic or traumatic delivery, maternal peri partum infection & urinary tract infection⁵.

According to the published report by Ali et al;(2014), it has been observed that out of 5.3 million live births in Pakistan, 270,000 new born die during the neonatal period from various infections⁶. Literature review has shown that this disease can easily be prevented by accurate diagnosis and hence the need for prompt management prior to parturition⁷.

Considering these facts, there is a dire need for reviewing the antenatal follow up protocols. The inclusion of High Vaginal Swabs (HVS) screening in the third trimester of pregnancy leading to appropriate maternal management, can reduce the infection transmission rates to a neonate. These protocols can be helpful for reducing the neonatal morbidity and mortality rates.

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