KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS REGARDING ANALGESIA IN LABOUR FOR WOMEN IN ETHIOPIA

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Aim
To assess the awareness and attitude of medical professionals towards pain relief in labour.

Method
A survey was distributed to different medical professionals in both rural and urban hospitals. Data was then collated and compared.

Results
164 surveys were completed. There was board representation from midwifery students, midwives, nurses, general practitioners, and specialists. 79% of respondents expected women to feel severe pain in labour. 75% were of the opinion that labour pain should be relieved but only 24% have knowledge regarding the WHO pain ladder. Common practices regarding pain management included non-pharmacological only. Reported main barriers to patients receiving analgesia included lack of awareness of patients and medical professionals. Many thought pain relief was not a priority for labouring mothers. 70% had concerns with using methods to relieve the experience of pain in labour. Fears regarding adverse effects on the baby 48%, the mother 12% and the delivery process 24% were reported.

Conclusion
Nearly all medical professionals expect women to suffer pain during labour. However simple steps to provide effective analgesia are not taken. A general attitude is that labour is a natural process and the patient should have a personal coping ability. Educational efforts must be made to change this viewpoint as well as discussion on a way forward for labour analgesia in Ethiopia.