TRENDS IN MATERNAL MORTALITY IN A TERTIARY HEALTH CENTRE IN THE GAMBIA

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The Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital (EFSTH), Banjul is the only tertiary health facility in The Gambia serving its 1.7 million people. The Gambia has made some progress in achieving MDG 5 with a reduction in maternal mortality ratio (MMR) from the 2001 figure of 730 to 360/100,000 live births in 2010.

Objectives
To determine the trend in MMR between January 2007 and December 2012 at EFSTH and identify any changes in the causes of maternal mortality.

Methodology
A retrospective review of all maternal deaths from January 2007 to December 2012 using a pre-structured questionnaire for case abstraction.

Results
519 maternal deaths occurred during the period. The MMR ranged from 1667/100,000 live births for 2007 to peak at 2105/100,000 in 2011 after showing a slight initial decline. Direct maternal deaths accounted for 77.8% of all deaths with obstetric haemorrhage (32.7%) the leading cause. 80.8% of maternal deaths were referred from other health facilities and 61.8% of all maternal deaths occurred within 24 hours of admission. The average time spent on admission before death was observed to have progressively decreased with referrals ending in death increasing progressively.

Conclusion
MMR has increased in the only tertiary centre in The Gambia. The fact that most deaths occurred within 24 hours of referral to the hospital suggests a need to strengthen the capacity of primary and secondary levels of care to identify problems, treat appropriately and refer in a timely manner.