

**MAKERERE**



**UNIVERSITY**

**KNOWLEDGE OF FIRST TIME MOTHERS ABOUT POSTPARTUM CARE**

**BY**

**NAMUTEBI MARIAM (BSN - MAK)**

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## ABSTRACT

Maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality rates in the postnatal period have been noted to be very high. In most hospital settings in Uganda, the mother who delivers by spontaneous vertex delivery is discharged within 24 hours and yet we do not have home based care teams to follow up the care of these mothers at home. It is therefore important for the mothers to be knowledgeable about care for the mother and newborn in the postnatal period. They also need to be aware of danger signs for both the postpartum mother and newborn and when to return to hospital. There are no documented studies showing what first time mothers know about postpartum care at the time of discharge. This study therefore sought to determine what first time mothers know about caring for themselves and the newborn at the time of discharge from Mulago Hospital so as to inform the health education teams and the ministry of health.

**Objectives:** The study aim was to determine the knowledge of postpartum care for the mother and the newborn in the postpartum period among first time mothers delivering at Mulago hospital between July and August 2013.

**Methods:** This was a cross sectional study conducted at Mulago hospital postnatal wards, 5B and ward 11. A total of 398 first time mothers who consented to participate in the study were interviewed using an interviewer administered semi structured questionnaire while they waited for their discharge letters after the postpartum health education. The data was entered into EPI DATA version 3.1, cleaned and exported to STATA version 11.1 for analysis. Univariate and bivariate analyses were done and the results presented in tables.

### **Results:**

There was generally low knowledge about postpartum care and specifically about maternal self care post delivery. Mothers had low knowledge about nutrition, breast care, rest and perineal care. The respondents had more awareness about caring for the newborn regarding breast feeding and cord care. There was a disparity in knowledge about prevention of hypothermia and the practice of bathing newborns early. More respondents knew at least one newborn danger sign (>80%) compared to one maternal postpartum danger sign (59.1%). Increased maternal age and having secondary school education were found to be positively associated with knowledge of at least one maternal danger sign. Having past experience in

caring for a newborn was found to be significantly associated with knowledge of a newborn danger sign.

**Conclusions and implications for practice:**

The findings in this study show that first time mothers generally have low knowledge about postpartum care at the time of discharge. Older first time mothers and those with secondary school education or more were more knowledgeable about postpartum danger signs for the mother. Knowledge of a newborn danger sign was associated with having more knowledge of danger signs for the mother. Knowledge of danger signs for the newborn was associated with having past experience in caring for a newborn.

**Key words: postpartum care, first time mothers, knowledge, danger signs**