The use of the labour partogram at Odi District Hospital in Gauteng, South Africa

Background

Levels of maternal mortality in sub-Saharan Africa remain unacceptably high. Currently there are 546 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, with South Africa’s maternal deaths at 138/100,000 live births (WHO, 2015). To improve quality of care, especially intrapartum care, it is essential that the labour partogram is used correctly and that protocols for managing complications are standardised.

Objectives

The aim of the study was to assess the level of knowledge of the labour partogram among obstetric nurses and doctors, assess how the labour partogram is implemented, and determine whether or not the doctors and nurses use the partogram differently.

Methodology

This was a cross-sectional study comprising 69 participants. Data collection was done using a previously tested, self-administered questionnaire.

Results

The mean age of the participants was 40.09 +/- 9.89 years. There were slightly more females (42; 60.9%). All but one participant (98.6%) indicated having heard about the labour partogram. The labour partogram is used routinely by most participants (54; 79.4%). Almost all participants (62; 89.9%) knew when to start using a partogram, yet less than half (33; 47.8%) were aware that a correct diagnosis has to be made before marking in the partogram. Doctors and nurses with clinical experience of more than six years demonstrated significantly more knowledge in application of the labour partogram than those with less experience (p=0.026).

Conclusions

All the participants at Odi District Hospital, irrespective of age, gender, profession and years of clinical experience, have inadequate knowledge of the labour partogram. Increased clinical experience resulted in more knowledge of application of the labour partogram.