

# **Good Governance in Neonatal Care: A Midwives Perspective**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Neonatal care stands as a critical cornerstone of healthcare, demanding meticulous attention and comprehensive governance to ensure the well-being of both mothers and newborns. This abstract explores the imperative synergy between effective governance and the unique perspective of midwives within the neonatal care landscape. With an emphasis on accountability, transparency, and equitable access, the chapter navigates through the multifaceted roles of midwives in championing evidence-based practices, advocating for mothers and newborn's rights, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. Drawing from a range of sources, this abstract underscores the pivotal role of good governance in optimizing neonatal outcomes while highlighting the intrinsic value that midwives bring to this arena. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that the midwife's perspective interlaces seamlessly with the principles of good governance, forging a path towards holistic and patient-centred neonatal care.

## **I INTRODUCTION**

The foundation of primary health care is provided by nurses and midwives. They are frequently the first and perhaps the only healthcare provider that patients consult. They can design and execute successful treatments to suit the needs of patients, families, and communities because they share the culture, strengths, and vulnerabilities of their local community. Obstetricians, midwives, nurses, community health workers, as well as traditional birth attendants, offer midwifery treatment in various regions of the world. Majority of the medical professional have concluded that midwifery care played a key role in the development of high-quality maternity services.

The ICM defines a Midwife as: "... a person who has successfully completed a midwifery education programme that is duly recognized in the country where it is located and that is based on the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM). ICM underscores that the midwife is responsible for the health and well being of the mother and her baby that are under her care. As stated in the ICM, Essential abilities for Basic Midwifery Practise, the midwife must acquire and maintain the highest levels of skills and abilities in all areas connected to mother and newborn care. She must also offer the healthy mother and infant with high-quality, all-encompassing care from pregnancy on.

All pregnant women and new mothers have a right to high-quality treatment that promotes a happy birthing experience, including respect and dignity, a partner of one's choosing, open communication with medical professionals, pain management techniques, movement throughout labour, and the ability to give birth in the position of one's choice. There are also various concepts highlight the multifaceted role of midwives in providing safe, compassionate, and family-centered care to newborns during the critical neonatal period namely, neonatal assessment, thermo-regulation, respiratory care, feeding and nutrition, family-centered care,

medication administration, developmental care, infection control, pain management, neonatal resuscitation, neurological care, cultural sensitivity, communication and collaboration, palliative care, ethical issues and neonatal transport.

In every location around the world, midwives are crucial to the provision of high-quality care. In light of the belief that pregnancy and childbirth are common life occurrences, the midwifery philosophy advocates for natural birth and suggests the midwife-led care approach. There will be better outcomes and more resource efficiency when midwifery care is delivered by educated and qualified midwives. They function best when included into the healthcare system through efficient teamwork, ample funding, and referral channels.

## **II PANORAMIC VIEW OF MIDWIFERY**

A vital component of any health system is midwifery, and when midwives collaborate with other healthcare professionals like doctors, nurses, community and public health workers, they help to ensure that the woman, her unborn child, and her family receive the appropriate treatment at the appropriate time. No matter where in the globe they reside or what their circumstances are, midwifery is important for all childbearing women, their infants, and their families. Evidence demonstrates that skillful, informed, and compassionate midwifery care lowers maternal and infant mortality and stillbirths, maintains mother and baby safety, and fosters health and well-being. By doing this, midwifery has a beneficial effect on the overall health system as well as the economic viability of communities and nations.

Optimizing normal biological, psychological, social, and cultural processes of reproduction and early life, prompt prevention and management of complications, consultation with and referral to other services, respecting women's individual circumstances and viewpoints, and working in partnership with women to strengthen their own capacities to care for themselves and their families are all essential traits of a skilled, knowledgeable, and compassionate midwife.

### **A) The Health And Well-Being of Childbearing Women & Infants**

As important as it is to save lives, it's also important to make sure that the great majority of mothers and newborns who survive delivery receive the right care and support to guarantee a healthy and satisfying start in life. According to estimates, 138 million women and 136 million infants make it through childbirth in a year. About 20 million of these women are expected to suffer clinical or psychological morbidity, such as incontinence, pain, or mental health problems, which can have a long-lasting effect on the physical and mental health of both the mother and the unborn child. Additional challenges could develop in the event of ongoing medical bills, an inability to work, or a need to care for family members.

Clinical and psychological morbidity are caused by unnecessary Caesarean births, which call for further anaesthesia treatments, routinely giving breastfed infants more fluids, and other improper delivery techniques. Some healthcare systems have developed in a way that gives technology and risk assessment a lot of weight. Such approaches permit the routine application of therapies that are beneficial for expectant mothers or premature infants who have difficulties, exposing healthy individuals to unnecessary and perhaps harmful procedures. For example, when necessary, a Caesarean delivery can save lives, but it provides no benefit and might even be harmful to people who decide not to have one.

## **B) Consequences of Pregnancy and Child Birth**

Despite the fact that a child's life journey begins at birth, what happens both before and after birth will have an impact on each child's future. The days are critical for setting the foundation for their long-term health, growth, and well-being from conception to age two. The neurological system and the child's brain are developing more quickly at that time than at any other in their lives.

Many researches have shown how supportive, high-quality care during pregnancy, birth, and following has a short-term impact on the social and psychological well-being of mothers and their babies. However, there are still few longer-term population data on the clinical consequences for social, emotional, developmental, and mental health. Since these long-term effects are rarely evaluated or tracked, our understanding of how different care systems affect patients is limited. Whatever the circumstance, it is apparent that the care and support received throughout pregnancy, delivery, and the postpartum period has a substantial impact on the client's ability to love and care for their child.

## **C) Maternal and Neonatal Health: Current Trends**

Even while pregnancy and birth are typically straightforward and joyful events, problems for the mother, foetus, and newborn can cause disability or even death if the right care is not given right away. Despite recent global advances in reducing maternal mortality, levels of mortality and morbidity for women and infants remain unacceptable high in many parts of the world, with poor quality care being a major contributing factor. As a result, the rights to health and life of expectant mothers and babies are gravely violated. Women still lose their lives due to pregnancy and childbirth every year, mostly in low- and middle-income countries. The causes of more than half of these fatalities are anaemia, significant blood loss, high blood pressure, and severe infections.

The tragic deaths of mothers and newborns, which have an impact on the partner, other children, grandparents, extended family, and neighbourhood. High-income countries also experience avoidable fatalities, despite the fact that low- and middle-income countries account for the majority of these deaths. According to UN inter-agency projections, the global maternal mortality ratio (MMR), which measures the number of deaths per 100,000 live births, fell by 34% between 2000 and 2020, from 342 deaths to 223 deaths, despite the fact that maternal fatalities have reduced by over 40% since 1990. This translates into a decline of, on average, 2.1% every year. Despite the fact that this is a significant decrease, it is still less than 6.4% annual rate needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030 by about one-third. The global MMR fell sharply between 2000 and 2015, however when reduction rates were averaged between 2016 and 2022, the numbers remained steady.

Most regions saw a halt in the rate of decline, and between 2016 and 2022, MMR increased in Western Europe, North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Progress is still possible, but it will need unified effort. During the past 20 years a small number of countries have cut their emissions at a rate of 15% or more, bringing them closer to or beyond the target reduction rates required to meet global commitments.

The first 28 days of an infant's existence are also marked by almost 2.7 million deaths, accounting for 45% of all fatalities in children under the age of five. One million of these deaths occur on the day of birth. By the end of the first week of life, there will have been nearly two million newborn fatalities overall. Once more,

the majority of these deaths could have been prevented. More than 80% of all infant fatalities and stillbirths are caused by neonatal infections, complications during labour and delivery such as birth asphyxia, and prematurity issues. Globally, it is estimated that 2.6 million stillbirths in the third trimester happened in 2015. Stillbirth rates have declined more slowly since 2000 as compared to maternal mortality or mortality in children under five. The loss is significant for women and families, and guilt or even a sense of failure may make the lingering grief harder.

### III Significance of neonatal care

Because it directly affects the health, well-being, and future of babies, neonatal care is of utmost importance in the field of healthcare. The neonatal period, sometimes known as the first 28 days of life, is a crucial stage characterized by notable developmental changes and a high degree of fragility. During this time, a newborn's physiological systems are changing from the safe intrauterine environment to the difficulties of the outside world. Despite being a natural process, this shift can be complicated and risky, necessitating specialized care.



**Figure 1: Components of Neonatal Care**

**Lowering neonatal mortality:** Neonatal mortality, or the death of a newborn within the first 28 days of life, is a major concern for world health. The reduction in neonatal mortality rates is largely attributed to the adoption of effective neonatal care practices. Neonatal nurses significantly contribute in improving the survival rates and ensuring a healthy start for newborns through diligent surveillance, early detection of problems, and rapid interventions.

**Avoiding Fatality and mitigating disabilities :** Care for newborns goes beyond basic survival. A variety of short-term and long-term health problems that could lead to chronic disabilities or impairments can be avoided with the right care throughout this time. Neonatal nurses are at the vanguard of providing comprehensive care that reduces the risk of future health consequences, from resolving respiratory distress and feeding difficulties to managing infections and developmental concerns.

**Family centered approach:** Neonatal care covers the entire family as a whole, not just the newborn. High levels of tension, anxiety, and uncertainty are frequent emotions experienced by parents of premature or

critically ill newborns. For the newborn and the family, midwives / neonatal nurses fill the roles of educators, advocates, and emotional supporters. Family-centered approach builds a strong foundation for the newborn's growth and development in addition to relieving the stress on parents.

**Laying the foundation for lifelong health:** It is possible to influence a person's trajectory towards long-term health and well being during the newborn era. A child's future health outcomes are influenced by proper nutrition, immunization, early developmental intervention, and infection avoidance during the newborn period. In order to ensure that the treatment goes beyond the hospital setting, neonatal nurses play a critical role in educating parents and passing on knowledge and skills.

**Contributing to global health goals:** The importance of newborn care is in line with global health goals like the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and the World Health Organization's endeavors to lower newborn and infant mortality. Since healthier children grow up to be successful adults who make positive contributions to society, improving neonatal outcomes has a knock-on effect on public health in general.

Neonatal nurses' knowledge, empathy, and commitment are essential to navigating the delicate and vulnerable neonatal period with the highest care and professionalism. Their contributions have an impact on future generations that extends far beyond the hospital's boundaries. We will be able to consider the contribution midwifery brings to care using the quality framework outlined in this chapter. It might serve as an example of the range of midwifery.

#### **D) Advancements in midwifery and neonatal care**

- **Telehealth and virtual care-**With the increased usage of telehealth platforms, midwives may now interact with clients, track pregnancies, and provide assistance from a distance. The COVID-19 epidemic has benefited greatly from this.
- **Genetic counselling and screening-**Expectant parents can make educated pregnancy decisions thanks to the growing involvement of midwives in genetic counselling and enhanced genetic screening possibilities.
- **Advanced ultrasound and imaging** Midwives may now undertake comprehensive imaging for a variety of gestational disorders, improving the precision of diagnosis and monitoring.
- **Integrated care models** More and more often, obstetricians, midwives, and other healthcare professionals work together to provide complete care for expectant patients with complex medical needs.
- **Pharmacological knowledge** Midwives are becoming more skilled at using pharmacological interventions, allowing them to offer pregnant patients a wider range of care alternatives.
- **Neonatal simulation training** Neonatal healthcare professionals can practise essential interventions and teamwork in a secure setting using high-fidelity simulation training, which improves their abilities and readiness for crises.
- **Non invasive monitoring** Innovative monitoring techniques eliminate the need for intrusive treatments and enable non-disturbing continuous monitoring of the baby's vital signs and oxygen levels.
- **Neuroprotective therapies** To safeguard the growing brains of premature infants and reduce the risk of neurodevelopmental problems, new medicines and regimens are being created.

## E) Gaps in neonatal care

- a) **Disparities in Access**- despite significant progress, disparities in access to quality neonatal care persist, particularly in low-income and remote areas. Socioeconomic factors, geographical barriers, and limited healthcare facilities contribute to unequal access, resulting in compromised outcomes for newborns in undeserved regions.
- b) **Limited awareness and education**- inadequate awareness among caregivers and communities about essential neonatal care practices contributes to gaps in early detection and management of newborn health issues. Fostering knowledge about warning signs, hygiene practices, and nutrition is crucial for preventing complications.
- c) **Equipment and infrastructure deficits**- many healthcare facilities, especially in resource-constrained settings, lack the necessary equipment, technologies and infrastructure to provide comprehensive neonatal care. A shortage of incubator, ventilators, and monitoring devices can hinder timely interventions.
- d) **Skilled workforce shortage** - the shortage of skilled neonatal healthcare professionals, including nurses, doctors, and midwives poses a significant challenge. High patient-to-provider ratios can impede the delivery of individualized care, affecting monitoring and intervention timelines.
- e) **Transition to home care** - the period after discharge from the hospital presents a vulnerable phase for newborns., as families may lack the knowledge and support required home-based neonatal care. Ensuring effective communication and education during this transition is essential to prevent complications.
- f) **Quality improvement gaps** - monitoring and improving the quality of neonatal care remain a challenge, standardized protocol, guidelines and audits are crucial to ensure consistent and evidence-based care across different healthcare facilities.
- g) **Infection control** - nosocomial infections continue to be a significant concern in neonatal care units. Inadequate infection control practices can lead to preventable complications, emphasizing the need for rigorous hygiene measures.
- h) **Family centred care** - while progress has been made, integrating families into the care process and providing emotional support can still be improved. Engaging parents as partners in care decision - making enhances the overall well-being of newborns.
- i) **Data collection and analysis** - comprehensive data on neonatal outcomes is often lacking or incomplete, making it challenging to accurately assess the impact of interventions and identify trends. Improved data collection and analysis are vital evidence-based policy -making.
- j) **Preterm birth and low birth weight** - despite advancements , preterm birth and low birth weight remain critical challenges. Addressing these factors through maternal health interventions and comprehensive neonatal care is essential to reducing neonatal mortality and morbidity.

Each of these concepts highlights different facets of the current gaps in neonatal care, providing a foundation for in-depth exploration and potential solutions.

## IV FRAMEWORK FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NEONATAL CARE

In the realm of neonatal care, nurses emerge as indispensable pillars, holding a vital responsibility in the well-being of newborn infants. This specialized field focuses on caring for newborns who are often born prematurely, with low birth weight, or facing medical complexities that demand immediate and specialized attention. Within this critical domain, nurses assume multifaceted roles that span far beyond the conventional boundaries of healthcare. Their watchful eyes and astute monitoring are essential in ensuring the stability of infants, as they closely observe vital signs, respiratory patterns, and oxygen saturation levels. Beyond vigilant surveillance, nurses hold the expertise to execute intricate medical procedures such as administering medications, managing ventilators, and skillfully inserting intravenous lines.

However, their role extends beyond the clinical realm; they also stand as pillars of support for families navigating through the uncertainties of neonatal care. With compassion and understanding, nurses provide emotional solace to parents while imparting essential knowledge about infant care and development. Moreover, nurses facilitate crucial bonding between parents and their infants through practices like kangaroo care, nurturing not only the physical health but also the emotional well-being of both newborns and parents. Collaborators in multidisciplinary teams, nurses seamlessly communicate and coordinate with various healthcare professionals to ensure holistic care. Their prompt recognition of subtle changes in a neonate's condition often proves to be the linchpin in early interventions that can influence outcomes significantly. With unwavering dedication, neonatal nurses ensure the continuity of care, offering round-the-clock attention that is paramount for the fragile nature of neonates. In essence, the role of nurses in neonatal care transcends the clinical realm; they are advocates, educators, caregivers, and sources of comfort, contributing profoundly to the foundation of a healthier start to life. Hence the role of a midwife or a neonatal nurse can be in two domains.

- Proficient Clinical knowledge and evaluation
- Education and career advancement

### **Proficient Clinical knowledge and evaluation**

Neonatal nurses must be skilled at performing in-depth examinations of neonates, keeping track of vital signs, and detecting minute changes in health status. A critically ill infant's life may be saved by prompt measures taken by their clinical expertise in spotting early indications of distress or problems.

A neonatal nurse must possess adept clinical knowledge and the ability to conduct thorough evaluations. They should shoulder the responsibility of caring for the most fragile and vulnerable patients- newborn infants who often require specialized attention due to prematurity, low birth weight, or medical complications. The neonatal nurse must equip her/him self with an extensive understanding of neonatal anatomy, physiology, medical conditions and the intricate interplay between various physiological systems. Meticulous observation and cues from newborns and their astute evaluation, neonatal nurses can identify signs of distress, infection or developmental concerns, enable timely interventions. Their clinical expertise must extend to collaborate with interdisciplinary teams, contributing to a broader diagnostic process.

**Table 1: Areas of ensuring Proficient Clinical knowledge and evaluation**

Clinical knowledge	
Individual care plans	Adapting to technological advances
Family centered care	Collaborative decision making
Addressing physical needs	Holistic care approach
Education and parental guidance	Advocacy and communication
Ensuring environmental comfort	Acknowledging grief and loss
Reducing parental stress and anxiety	Addressing emotional support
Encouraging developmental milestone	Recognizing cultural and religious values
Transition to home care	Continuous Education and skill development
Addressing siblings and family dynamics	Continued support beyond discharge

**Education and career advancement**

In the nursing profession, education serves as the cornerstone of both personal development and career development. Continuous learning isn't just a choice: it is a necessity to provide the highest quality of care to patients. This commitment is not only limited to degrees but extends to workshops, seminars, conferences and special training sessions. A well educated neonatal nurse and a midwife results in better decision, improved patient health, and enhanced safety.

Healthcare professionals remain current with the latest advancements, optimal methodologies, and evidence-based approaches through ongoing learning. Let's explore how training and advancement specifically pertain to nursing and midwifery:

- A) Formal nursing education program
- B) On the job training
- C) Speciality training
- D) Evidence based practice
- E) Certification courses
- F) Mentorships/Preceptorships

**Table 2: Benefits of continuous education and career advancement in neonatal nurses**

Benefits		
Collaboration with Interdisciplinary teams	Critical case management	Better ethical decision making
Efficient Team work	Quality improvement initiatives	Improvement in communication
Sharing of expertise	Best allocation of resources	Improved autonomy
Individual care plans	Better decision making in ethical issues	Improved communication
Miminal care gaps	Shared decision making	



## **F) NEED FOR A GOVERNANCE IN NEONATAL CARE**

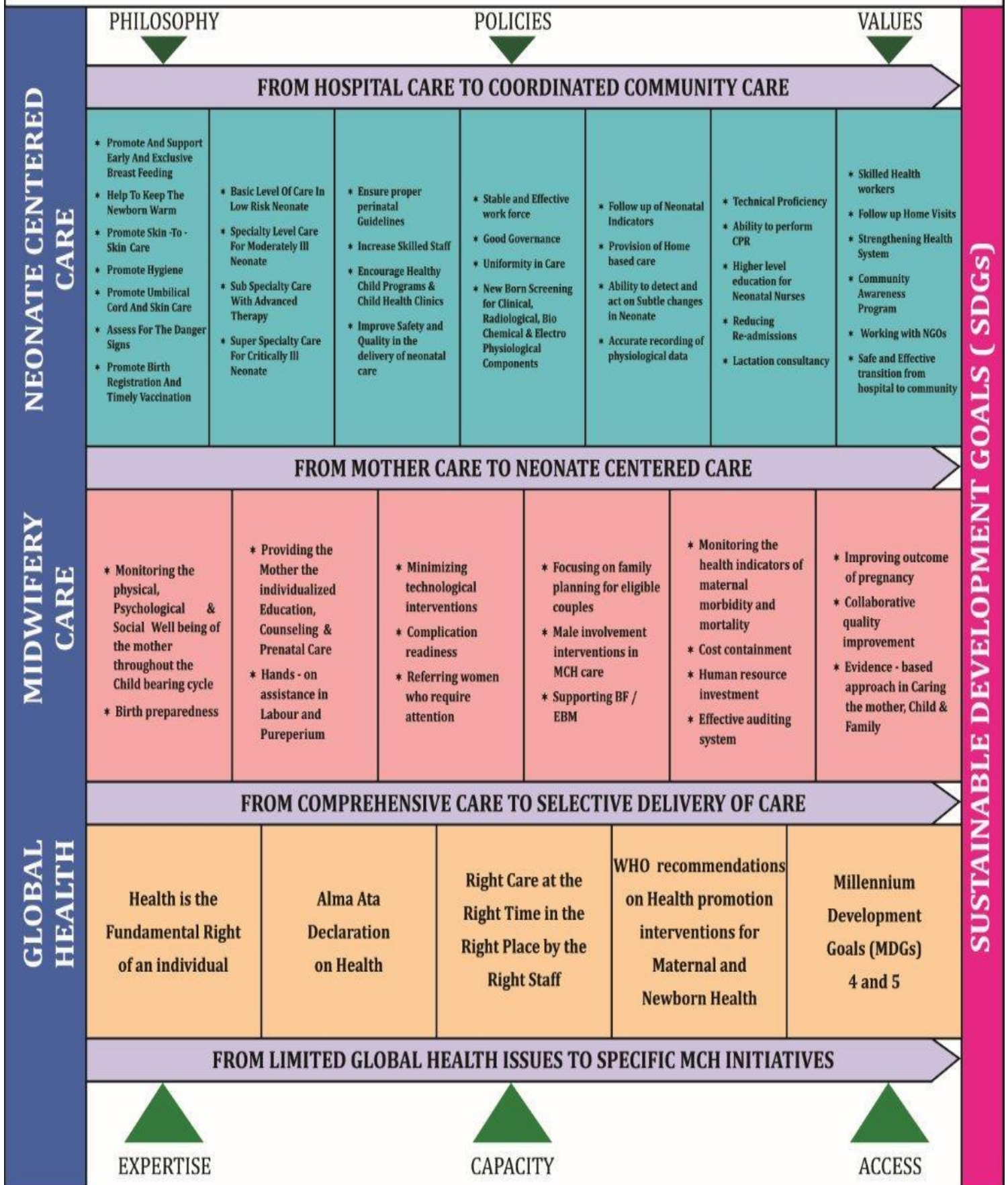
The compelling need for a robust framework for good governance in neonatal care arises from the intricate and delicate nature of this specialized field. Neonatal care encompasses a web of multifaceted considerations, ranging from medical interventions and technological advancements to emotional support and family engagement. Amidst these complexities, a structured governance framework becomes an imperative guide, ensuring that the highest standards of care are consistently upheld. Such a framework not only establishes clear protocols for medical interventions and clinical practices but also addresses crucial ethical, legal and patient rights dimension.

With the ultimate goal of optimizing neonatal outcomes, this framework acts as a compass directing healthcare institutions, practitioner and policy makers towards accountability transparency and equitable access. By providing a structured roadmap, it safeguards against disparities, minimizes errors and fosters a culture of continuous improvements. As neonatal care stands at the crossroads of vulnerable lines and intricate challenges, a governance framework serves as a cornerstone, channeling collective efforts into a unified approach that places the health and well-being of newborns at its heart.

The journey of nursing these fragile newborns is a tapestry woven with expertise, compassion, and innovation. It is within this tapestry that the author unveils a groundbreaking model, designed to illuminate the essential components that underpin a superior standard of nursing care for these precious lives. This model marks a momentous stride towards defining a holistic approach to neonatal care by introducing a comprehensive framework that transcends the boundaries of conventional practices.

Each component within this framework represents a pillar that supports the seamless integration of clinical expertise, emotional support, developmental care, family engagement, and cutting-edge technology. By spotlighting the key building blocks of exceptional care, it empowers healthcare professional with the road map to elevate their practices, ensuring that newborns receive the best possible start in life. This framework provides a structured blueprint for enhancing neonatal care practices through holistic approach. This will explore the core elements that define nurse's role in the specialized field and offer a compelling perspective that enriches the broader discourse on neonatal health care.

# A MIDWIFE'S PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS NEONATE CENTERED CARE



**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)**

**A) From Global health to specific MCH initiatives** - This component acknowledges the shift from broad global health objectives to targeted Maternal and Child Health initiatives, it recognizes that neonatal care is a subset of larger health goals and necessitates specialized attention due to the unique vulnerability of newborns. This transition highlights the importance of tailoring global health efforts to address the distinct needs of mothers and infants, ensuring that interventions are effective and impactful. This shift signifies a more nuanced approach that addresses the distinct challenges and opportunities within neonatal care. Specific MCH initiatives encompass efforts to reduce maternal mortality, enhance prenatal care, and ensure proper nutrition during pregnancy, all of which have a direct impact on the well-being of newborns.

**B) From comprehensive care to selective delivery of care** - Moving from comprehensive care to selective delivery emphasizes the importance of prioritizing interventions based on individual neonatal requirements. Not all infants need the same level of care, and this concept emphasizes efficient allocation of resources to ensure that interventions are appropriate and relevant for each newborn's condition. This aspect encourages healthcare providers to assess each newborn's condition and needs, and then provide targeted interventions that are most effective for that specific situation. This approach optimizes the use of resources, ensures efficient care delivery, and minimizes unnecessary intervention that might not be suitable for every newborn.

**C) From mother care to neonate centered care** - this aspect underscores the evolving focus from maternal well-being to the holistic care of newborns. While maternal health is a cornerstone, neonatal care shifts the spotlight to the unique needs of newborns. This paradigm acknowledges the importance of addressing newborn-specific factors such as gestational age, birth weight, and potential complications while still recognizing the critical interconnection with maternal health. Shifting from a focus on maternal care to neonate-centered care recognizes the distinctive requirements of newborns. While maternal health remains integral, neonate-centered care emphasizes the unique needs of newborns such as temperature regulation, feeding support and monitoring for potential complications. This approach acknowledges that newborns have their own set of challenges that require specialized attention and interventions. However, it's essential to recognize that neonate-centered care doesn't negate the interdependence between maternal and neonatal health, rather, it highlights the importance of balancing both aspects for optimal outcomes.

**D) From hospital care to coordinated community care**- this transition from hospital care to coordinated community care signifies a broader approach that extends beyond the healthcare facility. It recognizes that optimal neonatal outcomes involve not only hospital-based interventions but also a seamless continuum of care that encompasses the community. Collaborative efforts involving families, caregivers and community healthcare workers are crucial to providing sustained and well rounded support for newborns. While hospital care is critical for acute medical interventions, it's equally vital to ensure a smooth transition from hospital to home and community. Coordinated community care involves engaging families, caregivers, and community healthcare workers to provide ongoing support, education and monitoring, this approach acknowledges that the well-being of newborns is influenced not only by medical interventions but also by social determinants, family support, and access to resources within the community.

## V CONCLUSION

In the realm of neonatal care, the lens of a midwife brings into focus a profound understanding of the critical intersections between maternal and newborn health. 'Good Governance in Neonatal Care- A Midwife's perspective not only unravels the intricacies of effective governance but also sheds light on the invaluable role midwives play in this intricate tapestry. As we journey through the layers of this discourse, it becomes evident that the midwife's perspective serves as a beacon., guiding us towards a holistic approach that encompasses not only clinical expertise but also compassionate support for both mothers and newborns. From advocating from evidence-based practices to fostering seamless collaborating between multidisciplinary teams, the midwives' perspectives amplifies the significance of sound governance in neonatal care. It is within this realm that the values of accountability, equity and transparency coverage, creating a foundation upon which optimal outcomes for both mothers and newborns are built through the prism of good governance, illuminated by the midwife's lens, we embark on a journey that redefines neonatal care as a symphony of expertise, empathy and effective governance, ensuring that the lives are nurtured and safeguard with unwavering dedication.

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