

Background:

Birth asphyxia accounts for one-third of neonatal mortality worldwide.

Aims:

To determine the prevalence of birth asphyxia and associated risk factors at one Kenyan hospital; and to describe caregivers' readiness for and attitudes towards neonatal resuscitation of asphyxiated neonates.

Methods:

A total of 237 babies and 28 health workers were consecutively enrolled as part of a longitudinal cross-sectional study. Prevalence of asphyxia, and caregivers' practices and attitudes were measured through observation. Risk factors were identified through interviews with mothers and a review of their medical records.

Findings:

Birth asphyxia prevalence hospital was 5.1%. Independent predictors of birth asphyxia were: duration of labour (OR=3.86; 95% CI; P=0.041), meconium staining of amniotic fluid, and presence of oedema in pre-eclampsia.

Conclusions:

Having equipment alone is not enough if providers are not equipped to use it. Neonatal resuscitation skills are therefore vital to eliminating neonatal mortality.