

Maternity Care in Russia: Issues, Achievements, and Potential

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Abstract

In this review, we provide basic facts about maternity care services within the health care system in Russia. We give a short overview of such key aspects as the demographic situation, reproductive behaviour, regulatory framework for providing health care for women and children, maternal and perinatal mortality, and the availability of medical personnel.

In 2012, Russia began registration of births in accordance with the WHO recommendations (births with weight ≥ 500 g at ≥ 22 weeks' gestation). Introduction of this new registration system increased the completeness and quality of the collected information and expanded possibilities for future international comparative assessments.

A three-level system of specialized medical care has been introduced in Russia for women and newborns during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. In 2014, the system included 1942 state (public) maternity hospitals providing 20 obstetric beds per 10 000 women aged 15 to 49 years. More than 100 perinatal centres (level III) are currently functioning in the country, with 32 new perinatal centres planned to open by 2016. The total number of obstetrician-gynaecologists in Russia is approximately 44 000, providing a ratio of 5.7 specialists per 10 000 women. The total number of midwives is 62 000, providing a ratio of 8.1 midwives per 10 000 women.

In recent years we have succeeded in optimizing the maternity care system by increasing its accessibility and quality. This was achieved through qualitative and quantitative progress in the training of neonatologists, the development of intensive care technologies and neonatal critical care, capacity building of medical-genetic services and counselling, prenatal diagnosis, and the standardization of health care with data collection.

Key Words: health service organization, maternity service, obstetric care, perinatal mortality, maternal mortality, Russia

Competing Interests: None declared.

Résumé

Dans le cadre de cette analyse, nous fournissons des faits de base au sujet des soins de maternité offerts par le système de santé en Russie. Nous y offrons un bref survol de certains aspects clés : situation démographique, comportements génésiques, cadre réglementaire de l'offre de soins de santé aux femmes et aux enfants, mortalité maternelle et périnatale, et disponibilité du personnel médical.

En 2012, la Russie a commencé à enregistrer les naissances en fonction des recommandations de l'OMS (naissances en présence d'un poids ≥ 500 g à ≥ 22 semaines de gestation). La mise en œuvre de ce nouveau système d'enregistrement a accru l'exhaustivité et la qualité des renseignements recueillis, en plus d'élargir les possibilités en ce qui concerne la future tenue d'évaluations comparatives internationales.

Un système de soins médicaux spécialisés à trois paliers offerts pendant la grossesse, l'accouchement et la période postpartum a été mis en œuvre en Russie pour les femmes et les nouveau-nés. En 2014, le système comptait 1 942 hôpitaux de maternité d'état (publics) offrant 20 lits en obstétrique par 10 000 femmes âgées de 15 à 49 ans. Plus de 100 centres périnataux (niveau III) sont actuellement en fonction dans le pays; l'ouverture de 32 nouveaux centres périnataux est prévue pour 2016. En Russie, le nombre total d'obstétriciens-gynécologues s'élève à environ 44 000, soit 5,7 spécialistes par 10 000 femmes. Le nombre total de sages-femmes s'élève à 62 000, soit 8,1 sages-femmes par 10 000 femmes.

En accroissant l'accessibilité et la qualité du système de soins de maternité au cours des dernières années, nous avons réussi à en optimiser le fonctionnement. Nous y sommes parvenus grâce à l'évolution qualitative et quantitative de la formation des néonatalogistes, à l'élaboration de technologies des soins intensifs et à la mise sur pied de soins intensifs néonataux, au renforcement des capacités en matière de counseling et de services médico-génétiques, au diagnostic prénatal et à la standardisation des soins de santé grâce à la collecte de données.

INTRODUCTION

The current Russian public health service has inherited some features of its counterpart in the former Soviet Union, established by Dr Nikolay Semashko. The previous system was well-established and provided a uniform framework of health care for an entire population, both urban and remote.¹ It was grounded on principles that remain relevant in today's strategy for developing health care in Russia, including respect for the rights of citizens in the sphere of health, priority in disease prevention, priority for mother and child care, innovative development in public health care, and open dialogue with the community.²

After establishment of the Russian Federation in 1991, the health care system converted to a mixed model with shared coverage by the state budget and compulsory medical insurance.³ In accordance with Article 41 of the 1993 Russian Constitution, Russian citizens have free access to medical care at state and municipal medical facilities.⁴ The process of restructuring the national health care system began more than 20 years ago and continues today. Since 2015, health care secured by the state guarantees has been financed exclusively from compulsory health insurance funds.^{3,5}

The strategy for developing the Russian health care system is aimed at ensuring the availability of health care and improving the efficiency of services; the scopes, types, and quality of these must address morbidity levels and the needs of the population, taking advances in medical science into account.⁵

Currently, there is much evidence of mutual influence between the population's health and the country's economic development.^{6,7} Russia's gross national income per capita is continuously increasing, and by 2013 reached US\$ 12 097, classifying the country as high income.⁸ Simultaneously, total expenditure on health has grown from US\$ 276 per capita in 2005 to US\$ 957 per capita by 2013. Total expenditure on health as a proportion of gross domestic product was 6.5% in 2013, with government funding providing 48.1% of total health expenditure.⁹

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Geographically the territory of Russia covers Eastern Europe and Northern Asia, an area of 17 098 200 square kilometres with a population in January 2015 of 146.3 million people. The Russian Federation is the largest country in the world, covering more than one-eighth of the earth's inhabited land area; its population is ninth largest in the world, and its gross domestic product is the eighth largest. According to its constitution, the Russian Federation is a

federal state consisting of 85 equitable Subjects (territorial units). Every Subject holds its own executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The Federal Districts of Russia are nine territories uniting several Subjects according to their territorial, economic, and commercial features.¹⁰

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

Russia actively participates in international projects in reproductive health care. At the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, which consolidated the efforts of 179 countries, the Russian Federation endorsed the program of actions to be taken, outlining the dynamics of population development, reproductive health care, and reproductive rights.

During the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit, Russia was among 189 countries which committed to solving the global problems of humanity and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In 2010, during the Group of Eight Summit in Canada, the leaders of the participating states (including Russia) approved the Muskoka Initiative on women's health, newborns, and children under five years of age in developing countries. Russia's contribution to implementation of the Muskoka Initiative was to organize and conduct scientific and practical seminars and training courses for doctors from different countries of the world: these included Azerbaijan, Angola, Armenia, Afghanistan, Botswana, Vietnam, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Ethiopia, Sudan, Indonesia, Myanmar, Peru, India, Chad, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

At the beginning of the 21st century, improvement of the demographic situation in the Russian Federation has been noted through indicators such as an increase in life expectancy and birth rate, and a decline in the mortality rate, including infant and maternal mortality.

The birth rate in the Russian Federation has increased annually, reaching 13.3 per 1000 population in 2014. For the first time in 20 years, natural growth of the population has been noted. In 2014, the number of births recorded was 1 942 683, an increase of 46 861 over the previous year. The average age of women at all live births in 2014 was 28.0 years, and the total fertility rate was 1.7 children per woman.

Numbering 77.1 million, the female population in the Russian Federation represents 54% of the total population,

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