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**The long-term health benefits of receiving treatment from qualified midwives at birth**

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**1. Introduction**

Every day 7,300 newborns die across the world (WHO, 2017). The majority of these deaths occur in the first week of life, mainly due to preventable and treatable causes, such as infections, birth asphyxia and prematurity. Neonatal deaths constitute an increasing proportion of child deaths (46% in 2016), because, in the recent decades, the decrease in neonatal mortality has been slower than that from the post-neonatal period to age 5. As a result of slow progress in preventing neonatal deaths, the reduction in child mortality failed to meet one of the main Millennium Development Goals by 2015, having reached a half instead of two-thirds (UN, 2015). Currently, most neonatal deaths occur in the setting of home deliveries with poor access to health services, and it has been estimated that universal coverage by low-cost and affordable services could avert up to 70% of these deaths (Darmstadt et al., 2005). In such a setting, midwifery, when provided by midwives who are educated, licensed and regulated, has been shown to be the key to improvements in neonatal and maternal health and survival (Renfrew et al., 2015). Such evidence suggests that, if every umbilical cord could be handled with disinfection, the number of neonatal lives saved could reach a million. The effective actions for contemporary global initiatives, such as the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health and the Every Newborn Action Plan, together with the UN 2030 development agenda, prioritize skilled delivery by midwives and the availability of emergency obstetric facilities as solutions to high neonatal mortality.

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