



SEHAT CHECK



MAY
2023

—
A monthly roundup of
news articles on
women's health in
Pakistan

A Joint Project of



EDITOR'S NOTE

HELLO THERE!

This month has witnessed significant stories highlighting the invaluable contributions of female healthcare workers and nurses. From providing essential nutrition to delivering patient care, these dedicated professionals form the backbone of the medical profession. However, it is disheartening to observe that they are not receiving adequate compensation for their invaluable services. For Pakistan's healthcare sector to function effectively, it is crucial to prioritize fair wages and the deserved respect of these workers who play an integral role in its functioning.

Additionally, recent cases of monkeypox infection among a woman and a girl serve as a reminder of the need for preparedness within the healthcare sector. While the disease may not be widespread, it underscores the importance of being ready to handle any potential emergencies that could lead to an outbreak of monkeypox in the country.

Furthermore, the distressing news of two mothers and their babies losing their lives after delivery due to a doctor's negligence emphasizes the urgent need to address this issue. It is deeply saddening that both



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the mother and the baby had to face such tragic outcomes when it is within the capabilities of healthcare professionals to save their lives. Ensuring that doctors fulfill their responsibilities and provide competent care should not be an insurmountable challenge.

These issues call for immediate attention and concerted efforts to rectify the current state of affairs. By addressing these pressing concerns, we can work towards a healthcare system that truly prioritizes the well-being and safety of its patients.



FLOODS

Source:
Express
Tribune

Date:
3-5-2023



WHO TRAINS NURSES ON INFECTION CONTROL IN PUNJAB

WHO, in collaboration with the Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Department, Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Punjab, and Post-Graduate Medical Institute/Lahore General Hospital, organised a four-week training program on infection prevention and control (IPC) for nurses from flood-affected districts Dera Chazi Khan and Rajanpur. The training aims to enhance the skills of 31 nurses to strengthen IPC measures at health facilities in southern Punjab. The inaugural session of the training was attended by prominent healthcare professionals.

WOMEN, CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

Climate change has impacted many people worldwide, from Syria and Turkey to Bangladesh, Maldives and Pakistan. Coping with the recent floods has left a lot of the population of Pakistan hanging by a thread. Aside from the economic losses, there are many other problems, and the female population bears the brunt of most of them. It is estimated that about 80 per cent of the people displaced by climate change are women, according to UN Environment. Climate change is leading to the spread of diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, hepatitis gastroenteritis, and tuberculosis which are transmitted by insects, humans, and exacerbated by poor access to clean food, water, and healthcare. Women are at increased risk of these diseases especially due to the pooling and stagnation of flood and rainwater, and lack of sanitation measures. According to the UNDP, women and children are 14 times more likely to die during a climate-induced disaster. The role of caregivers puts them at high risk for not just contracting disease but further spreading it. This fact alone is incredibly alarming and could very well become a leading factor that drastically changes the overall picture of the health of the population. Women are also more likely to be affected by extreme weather events, such as floods, droughts, and storms, which are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change.

Source:
The News

Date:
6-5-2023

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Source:
Express
Tribune

Date:
5-5-2023



PINDI GETS FIRST PREMARITAL COUNSELING CLINIC

A first premarital counselling clinic was inaugurated in Rawalpindi to help couples better plan and prepare for marriage. The pilot project with the help of Norway and under the supervision of the District Health Authority has been inaugurated at the Rural Health Centre Khayaban Sir Syed, under which couples will be given family planning counseling before marriage. Officials said that such programme to upgrade family planning and maternal and child health facilities will be started in seven more rural health centres across the district in the coming days. Timely family planning counseling will enable new couples to plan according to their means for a quality life for themselves and their children with limited children. The project aims to make the family planning programme a success by providing parents and children with a quality life, quality education and better employability for a successful life based on better skills. The clinic was inaugurated by representatives of Norway Funds for Family Planning Services along with Chief Executive District Health Authority Dr Saadat Ali Khan, District Coordinator (IRMNCH) Dr Naveed Akhtar Malik, Family Planning Project Specialist Dr Jameel and Dr Javed. Speakers said that in view of increasing health, employment and social problems due to the growing population, it was important to provide the best family planning counseling to the couples before marriage so that they can have fewer children and live a prosperous life. The representatives of the Norwegian Family Planning Project said that by strengthening the family planning programme, not only the heavy expenses on the health sector can be reduced, but also healthy children and their healthy parents can have an opportunity to live a better life in the society. They said that when couples were provided with the best counseling in the clinic before they tie the knot, they will be able to start their successful married life with better planning.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Source:

The
Frontier
Post

Date:

9-5-2023



BISP PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO MARGINALIZED FAMILIES

Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety (PA&SS) and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Ms. Shazia Marri has said that the BISP is providing financial assistance to the marginalized families of Pakistan. She said this while presiding over the three-day first annual National Social Protection Conference organized by the BISP in support of the German cooperation Organization GIZ being held at Murree from 8-10 May, 2023. The conference brought together social protection experts, representatives of international organizations, and other stakeholders to discuss various social protection initiatives and programmes in Pakistan. The World Bank representative and German Ambassador also addressed the conference via video-link. Addressing the opening session, Ms. Shazia Marri said that the BISP is contributing towards the better health of infants and their mothers belonging from poor households. Moreover, it is also providing educational stipend to needy children, which resulted in an increase in the enrollment of children in schools. The Benazir Income Support Programme continues to be a beacon of hope for millions of underprivileged families across the country, she added.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

PREMATURE BIRTHS CLAIM A MILLION LIVES YEARLY WORLDWIDE; UN REPORT

Source:

Daily Times

Date:

11-5-2023

A “silent emergency” that is claiming one million tiny lives born premature each year requires concerted action to swiftly improve children’s health and survival, according to a new report released by UN agencies and partners on Wednesday. Almost 45 percent of the 13.4 million pre-term births in 2020 happened in five countries – Pakistan, India, Nigeria, China and Ethiopia – the report, entitled, ‘Born too soon: Decade of action on preterm birth’, said. Produced by a range of agencies, including the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), with its Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), the report outlines a strategy forward to address this phenomenon, which has been long under-recognized in its scale and severity.

EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE FOR MOTHERS & CHILDREN STARTED IN BALOCHISTAN

Balochistan Health Minister Syed Ehsan Shah on Friday said that for the first time in Balochistan, the emergency ambulance service for mothers and children under Merck 1122 was launched with the support of Balochistan Human Investment Project. He expressed these views while addressing at a ceremony as the chief guest, Environment Secretary Asfandiyar Kakar, Project Director Balochistan Human Investment Project Saqib Kakar, Public Health Specialist Balochistan Human Investment Project Dr. Ali Nasir Bugti, Staff Officer of Health Minister Zakir Ali, DG Mark Mohammad Asfar, Director Operation Merck Operation Riyaz Ahmed, Director Technical Dr. Amir Bakhsh, Education and Nutritionist Haroon Kasi, IT Officer Shiraz Khan were present on the occasion. The Health Minister appreciated the provision of 24 ambulances for mother and child by Merck 1122 on behalf of Director Balochistan Human Capital Project Saqib Kakar. Safe transfer to the hospital was an important step.

Source:

Daily Times

Date:

13-5-2023

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

MOTHER, CHILD DIE FROM 'DOCTOR'S NEGLIGENCE'

Source:
Express
Tribune

Date:
17-5-2023

A mother and her newborn died due to the alleged negligence of a lady doctor at a private hospital in the Ghazi area of Haripur. According to a spokesperson for the police, an FIR has been registered against the lady doctor and further investigation is under way. In this regard, the woman's husband told the police that the lady doctor was responsible for the death of his wife and child. He took the stance that he had taken his wife to the private hospital two days ago. The doctors asked him to come back for a check-up on the next day as his wife's case was normal. "By 12am, the lady doctor told me that the condition of your wife and child is dangerous, an operation will have to be performed. When I went to the operation theater around 1am, my wife was dead and the operation was not done even though she was kept in the hospital for twelve hours." He alleged that his wife and child have died due to the negligence of the lady doctor. After obtaining an autopsy report, the Ghazi police registered a case against the lady doctor under Section 322. Meanwhile, other sources claimed that the case of the death of the mother and child occurred due to the nurses' negligence.

WOMEN & CHILDREN HOSPITAL BANNU LACKS DOCTORS, BEDS (TRANSLATION)

People are compelled to visit private hospitals due to lack of doctors and beds in Bannu Women & Children Hospital. The hospital serves not only Bannu District but also provides health services to the residents of Lakki Marwat, North Waziristan, Karak and Mianwali. The hospital has 8 male and 8 female doctors who work in three different shifts. The hospital doesn't just serve Bannu District but also provides health services to the residents of Lakki Marwat, North Waziristan, Karak and Mianwali. Emergency and OPD of the hospital have insufficient number of medical practitioners while the administration refuses to admit patients in the wards as operation theatre has capacity to serve less number of patients.



Source:
Daily
Mashriq

Date:

17-5-2023

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

WB-FUNDED PUNJAB FAMILY PLANNING PROJECT GETS NOD

As the 7th census put the country's population growth rate at 2.8pc, family planning initiatives have started to get traction, beginning with a project costing over Rs35bn for implementation in 10 critical districts of Punjab. Sources told Dawn that the five-year Punjab Family Planning project, sponsored by the World Bank, involving a \$130 million loan, including substantial technical grants, was presented in a meeting of the Central Development Working Party with very aggressive targets, like reducing the total fertility rate (TFR) from 3.4pc to 2.5pc and decreasing unmet need from 17pc to 7pc till 2027. The planning commission has raised certain questions before formally approving the project. The sources said the healthcare and population welfare departments of Punjab responded by naming the targeted districts but were asked to document '10 lagging districts to be focused on under the project along with the data about the districts where the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) remained low and justify how to achieve the 'over-ambitious' transition challenges.

Source:

Dawn

Date:

22-5-2023

LADY DOCTOR EXPELLED, OTHER DOCTOR AND NURSE SUSPENDED OVER DEATH OF MOTHER AND CHILD (TRANSLATION)

A lady doctor has been fired while another doctor and a nurse were suspended after negligence on the death of mother and child was proved under PEEDA Act. A month ago, a patient named Maria was referred to THQ Jhelum from THQ Sohawa for delivery where doctors and nurse have referred her to Rawalpindi without any checkup. The patient Maria along with the child died on the way to hospital. The Deputy Commissioner had taken notice of the incident after it was reported on social media and formed an inquiry committee. The committee found the said doctors and nurse responsible for negligence in the matter. The doctors and staff of the hospital have started protesting against the decision and are demanding to reverse the action.



Source:

Daily Jinnah

Date:

25-5-2023

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Source:

Daily Jinnah

Date:

26-5-2023



SINDH'S MATERNITY RATE IS 3.6PC, SPEAKERS (TRANSLATION)

With an average annual growth rate of 2.41 percent in Sindh, the total current population is 56.3 million (2022), estimated to grow to 95.7 million by 2050. 3,000 maternal deaths occur annually due to insufficient health coverage, which can be reduced by 33 percent if contraceptive use rises from 31 percent to 49 percent. Total fertility rate in Sindh is 3.6 and high fertility contributes to infant mortality and malnutrition. As a result, 60 infants die before reaching one year of age (per 1000 live births) and 50 percent of children under the age of five are stunted in Sindh. Currently, more than half of the girls at 51 percent (age 5-16), are out of school in Sindh, together with 39 percent of boys. Without investment in family planning, women's empowerment and education it will be challenging to accommodate the growing population. These findings were shared at the Consultative Workshop on Voluntary National Survey and International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held on Thursday, 25th May in Karachi by the Federal Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives in collaboration with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The consultation aimed to assess the progress made at the provincial level in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

DISEASES & INJURIES

Source:
Dawn

Date:
7-5-2023



MINOR GIRL, TEENAGE BOY TEST NEGATIVE FOR MPOX

Two suspected cases of mpox (monkeypox) turned out to be negative in analysis carried out at the provincial reference lab at the Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) on Saturday. The suspected patients – a nine-year-old girl and a 16-year-old boy – had arrived at the Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, from Jeddah, a day earlier. Pakistan has reported three cases of mpox, two in Islamabad and one in Karachi, since a national alert has been declared at airports and other entry points over the viral infection last month. Officials state that there is no evidence of localised transmission.

‘BUSINESS COMMUNITY SHOULD WORK FOR WELFARE OF SPECIAL PERSONS, BREAST CANCER PREVENTION’

First lady Begum Samina Alvi on Tuesday called upon the business community to play role in welfare of the persons with disabilities and raising awareness to prevent breast cancer among women. Speaking as chief guest at an awareness session about breast cancer among the women organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here, Begum Alvi said promotion of awareness about breast cancer was the need of the hour because timely diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer can prevent this fatal disease. She said the business community had a pivotal role in the socio- economic development of any country. After the collective efforts, she said a substantial success had been achieved in awareness against breast cancer. She said women should be aware of any abnormal changes in the body and consult a doctor immediately.

Source:
The
Nation

Date:
10-5-2023

DISEASES & INJURIES

FIRST PAKISTANI WOMAN TESTS POSITIVE FOR MONKEYPOX

A 19-year-old woman was tested positive for monkeypox in Islamabad on Saturday. She had arrived from Saudi Arabia and admitted to the isolation ward of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) after being referred by the authorities at the Islamabad airport, according to Pims sources. "The sample was taken/collected on Saturday morning and sent to the National Institute of Health (NIH). In the evening, the institute confirmed that it was a positive case. "The patient belongs to Gujranwala and is the first female in Pakistan who has been infected with mpox. Earlier, two male [patients] tested positive in Islamabad and another male patient detected in Karachi," the sources added.

Source:
Dawn

Date:
21-5-2023

MONKEY
POX
VIRUS

'SMOKING IN WOMEN, KIDS RISING'

The rise in number of women and child smokers is alarming, reports a network of academic researchers and professionals. It endorsed the increase in taxes on cigarettes and deplored the lobbying being made by multinational companies to reduce taxes. The network reports that about seven per cent of women smoke, causing a health burden of over Rs615 billion annually to the national exchequer. The government jacked up Federal Excise Duty (FED) on cigarettes in February to discourage the sale of cigarettes, smokers, and boost its revenue which anti-tobacco activists and the civil society appreciated, urging the government to further increase it. The network reports that studies have shown that the highest proportion of female smokers in Pakistan resides in rural areas (10%) and are less educated (12%). It reports the highest proportion of female smokers in Pakistan resides in rural areas (10%) and are less educated (12%). 19.5 per cent of women smokers age from 25 to 29 years. Sindh has 34% of women smokers. 58.5 per cent of women smokers lives in rural areas and 71.7 per cent are illiterate. 33.1 per cent are very poor and 78.6 per cent are unemployed. 94.5 per cent of women smokers are married or divorced. 52.7 per cent of women smokers have gone through domestic violence at a stage.

Source:
The News

Date:
28-5-2023

DISEASES & INJURIES

Source:

Daily
Mashriq

Date:

30-5-2023



MANY GIRLS FAINT AFTER DRINKING POISONOUS WATER IN HIGH SCHOOL OF KARAK (TRANSLATION)

Twenty female students in a government school located in the Karak district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) fainted after consuming poisonous water. Upon receiving the news of the incident, Deputy Commissioner Karak Ahmad Zeib instructed Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Karak Younis Khan and Additional Assistant Commissioner One Karak Shamimullah to assess the situation on-site. Rescue 1122 promptly responded to the incident, providing immediate first aid to approximately 20 girls and transporting them to the district headquarters hospital. Most of the girls are now in stable condition and are being discharged. Initial reports suggest that a toxic substance accidentally fell into the water tank of Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Jandri, rendering the water unsafe for consumption. After drinking the contaminated water, the students experienced deteriorating health conditions and were subsequently transferred to a hospital. Fortunately, doctors have reported that the condition of the affected girls is no longer critical.

HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Source:
The News

Date:
10-5-2023



COUNTRYWIDE INITIATIVE LAUNCHED TO IMPROVE MATERNAL NUTRITION IN PAKISTAN

Nutrition International in partnership with the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination and provincial health departments Tuesday launched a campaign - NourishMaa - to improve maternal nutrition in Pakistan by building capacities of healthcare providers (HCPs) and frontline health workers (FHWs) in six selected districts that report poor maternal nutrition indicators. "Improving the knowledge and capacity of healthcare providers to address maternal nutrition issues and promote a collective responsibility approach is the need of the hour," said Mirza Nasiruddin Mashhood Ahmad, Special Secretary NHS, while speaking at the launching ceremony of the campaign. Endorsing the NourishMaa campaign and committing to its effective implementation, Dr Ahmad referenced the Pakistan National Maternal Nutrition Strategy 2022-27, which calls for increasing awareness about maternal nutrition among individuals, families, communities, healthcare providers, policymakers and the public at large.

HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Source:
Express
Tribune

Date:
11-5-2023



LADY HEALTH WORKERS DEMAND RIGHTS

Lady health workers working in various hospitals and basic health units across the Haripur district have voiced their serious concerns over the denial of their basic rights. They sought better pay and compensation against the services they render during various campaigns from time to time. The lady health workers gathered at the Haripur Press Club to share their grievance against the health department, which they claimed has turned a blind eye to their plight and sufferings and the illegal deduction from their pay and allowances. Lady Health Workers Association President Shahnaz Bibi said that extra work was taken from them, and their DDM cards were filled but they were never paid for the extra work they do. She said that even during the coronavirus pandemic, the lady health workers worked 24 hours a day by putting their own lives at risk but they were never rewarded and their work was barely recognised. She said that despite years of service, they were still working at a lower grade with a minimum salary. Shaista Bibi, the association's patron, was also present during the protest. The lady health workers complained that they were denied facilities and compensation compared to employees of other government departments, including TA/DA and additional compensation during special campaigns.

HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Source:
Express
Tribune

Date:
12-5-2023



INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY TODAY

The International Nurses Day (IND) will be observed on Friday (today) across the country with the theme 'Our Nurses, Our Future'. The day is celebrated around the world every year on May 12 which is the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale. According to a World Health Organisation (WHO) report 'State of the World's Nursing 2020: Investing in Education, Jobs and Leadership', nurses and midwives make up more than half of the health workforce in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean region. In the federal capital, Islamabad Medical and Dental College (IMDC) and Islamabad Nursing College (INC) organised an event to commemorate International Nurses Day 2023 with an aim to pay tribute to the nursing community for their invaluable services to humanity. A large number of nurses, nursing students, nursing faculty, doctors, other medical professionals and people from different walks of life participated in the event where tableau, songs, quiz, parody skits and poetry segments were performed. The audience learnt a great deal about the profession of nursing from these activities and from the insightful speeches of the management and nursing professionals.

HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Source:
Frontier
Post

Date:
23-5-2023



SHAUKAT KHANUM HOSPITAL CELEBRATES VITAL ROLE OF NURSES IN HEALTHCARE

The Nursing Division of Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (SKMCH&RC) in Lahore and Peshawar organised an event to celebrate the vital role of nurses in healthcare. More than one hundred nurses from different areas of SKMCH&RC and other institutions including PKLI and National Hospital attended the event. Nursing Director of SKMCH&RC Ms. Rehana Elahi, Medical Director of SKMCH&RC Dr Asif Loya, and Chief Medical Officer of SKMCH&RC Dr Aasim Yusuf were also present. Ms. Rehana Elahi said that the coronavirus pandemic challenged healthcare systems around the world and nurses rose to this challenge and were at the frontline in this battle. She said that this event was organised as part of a series of activities organised in the month of May, which is the birth month of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, to celebrate nurses and their commitment and dedication to patients and families. Dr Aasim Yusuf said, "We are grateful for all the hard work that nurses do, round the clock, to take care of patients. Hospitals cannot run without nurses." He elaborated on this year's International Nurses Day theme "Our Nurses. Our Future" in the context of SKMCH&RC and explained the steps taken by the Shaukat Khanum facilities to invest, protect, value and respect nurses. In his message for nurses, he said, "You are the patients' advocates and your role is paramount in ensuring patient safety."

HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Source:
Dawn

Date:
24-5-2023



45,000 LHWS TO BE HIRED IN FIVE YEARS, SAYS MINISTER

Pakistan will increase the number of community-based lady health workers from 89,000 to 135,000 within five years, considering the health workforce crises in the country, Abdul Qadir Patel, the federal health minister, announced at the World Health Assembly in Geneva on Tuesday. Congratulating the WHO director and his team of experts and members on the organisation's 70th anniversary, he said, "This anniversary signifies an important moment in global collaboration, when countries of the world came together and founded WHO, to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable." Referring to the Sustainable Development Goals, initiated by WHO in order to move towards a more sustainable world, he said, "one of the goals demands universal health coverage by providing quality essential health services to people without financial hardship."

HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Source:
Dawn

Date:
26-5-2023



IN PAKISTAN, ONE NURSE CATERS TO OVER 10 PATIENTS: HEALTHCARE WATCHDOG

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority (IHRA) Dr Quaid Saeed on Thursday said the current nurses:patient ratio is 1:10.6 whereas the recommended ratio is 1:4 patients. He was speaking to participants of an event held in connection with International Nurses Day (IND) held at Maroof International Hospital (MIH) with a theme of “Our Nurses - Our Future”. Dr Saeed said nurses worked tirelessly to save lives and look after and care for people with complex health conditions often with little recognition. “As of 2021 there are over 200 nursing schools and colleges and a University in Pakistan, according to Pakistan Nursing Council. The lack of quality nursing colleges and low pays in both public and private sectors, leads to qualified and capable nurses to seek jobs in other countries,” he said. However, he announced that new government projects were in the pipeline that included educational institutions to offer quality education up to PhD. While addressing the ceremony, the hospital CEO Haroon Naseer said the role of nurses in serving humanity can never be neglected. He said nursing department across the globe was the backbone of the medical sector. “The global pandemic of Covid-19 made it very clear that despite so much uncertainty and increasing risk of infection nurses didn’t allow the fear to take over but they remained on the front lines to save humanity. Nursing is predominantly seen as female profession in Pakistan. This can lead to gender discrimination and biased in the work place,” he said.

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Gender Watch

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