

Continuity of Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Care through MCH Handbook for Ensuring the Quality of Life

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Abstract

Comprehensive approaches of health promotion and the quality of reproductive health care have been identified as key elements of MCH handbook development strategy. After adopting the strategy and getting experience from Japanese MCH handbook some countries have been implementing handbook system in its regular MCH program. Since 1998 International symposium and conference on MCH handbook multidisciplinary experts contributed their valuable thoughts, which were focusing mainly on MCH handbook initiatives, development, expansion as well as approaches to its utilization and research scopes. Specific actions are proposed for advocacy, communication, networking, collaboration, and partnerships for the development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and sustainability of MCH handbook program in the world. The successful outcome of model projects and or field researches i.e. community based and hospital based survey find out the effects of utilization of handbooks in various countries. Up until now, International collaboration symposium and conference on MCH handbook experts have exchanged and shared evidence from several countries. Experts also have suggested that development of MCH handbook has been successful in making policy out of practice and vice versa through effective approach. MCH handbook therefore, could be an effective tool for continuity of maternal, neonatal and child health care to ensure the quality of life.

Key words: Maternal health, child health, neonatal health, handbook, continuum care, developing countries, Japan

Introduction:

The maternal and child health (MCH) handbook is one of the comprehensive health promoting home-based booklets which includes birth planning, pregnancy related health check up schedules and emergency care, delivery information, postnatal care, family planning, immunization, neonatal and child care guide and acts as a two way communication tools between health care provider and pregnant mother & their families to raise awareness on safe motherhood and quality maternal and child health services.

The purpose of MCH handbook is to incorporate information that ranges from primary health care to specific issues of reproductive health, pregnancy and child care; acts as a motivational tool for health care providers and pregnant mothers' family to assist and encourage to empowerment of pregnant mothers to seek medical care, where and how, when needed; provides with home base medical records, referral documents of pre and post natal mother and child health care services to assures the continuum of care.



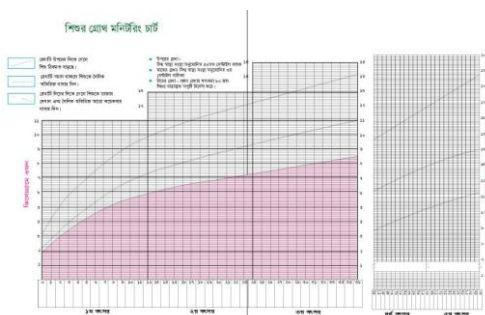
Cover pages of selected MCH handbooks in the world



Selected content pages from Bangladesh MCH handbook '08: Birth Planning



Oral dehydration solution (ORS) preparation instruction for diarrhoea treatment at home



Child health growth monitoring graph

MCH Handbook Conference:

This report summarizes the recent past and current international development on maternal and child health (MCH) handbook

activities and opportunity as well as challenges it poses. Comprehensive approaches of health promotion and the quality of reproductive health care have been identified as key elements of MCH handbook development strategy. After adopting this strategy and getting experience from Japanese MCH handbook, some countries have been implementing MCH handbook system in its regular MCH program, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand are among the few. However, several difficulties have been experienced by some of the developing countries in the way to achieve successful development and utilization of MCH handbook in its national health system, due to lack of budgets, human resources, and awareness among people. International collaboration, one of the strategies for handbook development, is expected to alter the problematical situation by assembling health personals, policy makers, and donors together under one roof.

International symposiums and conferences are regarded to be initiatives which enhance international collaboration. The first International symposium on MCH handbook was started in 1998 in Tokyo followed by Manado, Bogor in Indonesia, ASEAN Institute for Health Development (AIHD), Mahidol University in Thailand and Ben Tre in Vietnam by the year 2001, 2003, 2004, and 2006 respectively. Up until now, nearly 200-350 participants from 10-16 countries have shared their knowledge and experiences in each international symposium and conference.

The multidisciplinary resource personnel's contributed their valuable thoughts, which were focusing mainly on handbook initiatives, development, expansion, as well as the approach to its utilization and research scopes. Specific actions are proposed for advocacy, communication, networking, and collaboration, partnerships for the development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability of MCH handbook program around the world.



The 6th International Conference on MCH Handbook, Tokyo Nov 8-10, 2008

The 6th International Conference on Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Handbook held from November 8-10, 2008 in Tokyo, Japan. The conference hosted by International Collaboration Division, Osaka University, Japan and Health and Development Service (HANDS) with other international collaborative support partners i.e. UNFPA Tokyo office, UNICEF Tokyo, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The theme of the 6th International Conference was “MCH Handbook for the Promotion and Maintenance of Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Care and the Integrated Achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4, 5 and 6: Ensuring the Quality of Life through MCH Handbook”. It was attended by 350 participants representing 16 countries around the globe.

During three-day conference, 4 panel speaker presentations, 9 countries oral country report presentations, 3 plenary presenter entitled “Introduction and evaluation of MCH handbook program, International collaboration and MCH handbook, Research evidence on MCH handbook program” as well as a daylong field visit at Hitachiomiya city, Ibaraki prefecture was taken place.

Opening Speech(s):

In the opening session Prof. Keizo Takemi

of Harvard School of Public Health stated that maternal and child health care had been identified as an important agenda on the global health. He added Japanese role to the world at large to strengthen health care system underlining the concept of human security and protection by human empowerment through MCH handbook. Mr. Yoshihisa Ueda of JICA emphasis on international assistance to improve maternal and child health and initiatives to develop country focused MCH handbook and its management training in accordance to local needs. Dr. Kiyoko Ikegami, Director, UNFPA Tokyo Office pointed out the most lagging Millennium Development Goal 5- Maternal health and UNFPA is working on MDG 5 to improve maternal health through safe motherhood initiatives. Mr. Dan Rohrmann, Deputy Director UNICEF New York Office welcome conference delegates from 16 countries and finally, Professor Dr. Yasuhide Nakamura, Ph.D., Representative of HANDS and Professor, Department of International Collaboration & Research Center for Civil Society, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Osaka University, Japan delivered an opening speech entitled “MCH Handbook in the World” and presented remarks on Japanese experiences and global needs in the 21st century towards continuum of care for pregnant mother, newborn babies, infants and child health care.



Panel Discussion and Country Report:

In the first day afternoon 4 panelist were presented in panel discussion (presentation title and presented by as below) under the session

entitled “Ensuring the Quality of Life through MCH Handbook”.

1. MCH Handbook in an effort to achieve MDG 4& MDG 5 by Dr. Budihardja of the Republic of Indonesia 2. 23 years of MCH Handbook in Thailand Since 1985 by Associate Professor Sirikul Isaranurug from Thailand 3. Handbbok on Maternal and Child Health - Toward its Use in Vietnam by Dr. Dinh Thi Phuong Hoa of MoH, Vietnam 4. Improvement of Maternal, Neonatal & Child Health in Bangladesh through MCH Handbook by Dr. Shafi U. Bhuiyan, from Bangladesh.

The session was concluded by Prof. Dr. Azrul Azwar (Indonesia) as follows:

It was a very comprehensive and informative presentation with regards to the MCH handbook program from each country and from the presentation it is clear for us that the use of MCH handbook has contributed to a lot of benefits not only to the health provider, we could use it as a tool, and use it to monitor the patient; but also for the health consumers, the mothers and families, because they can use this book as a source of information, so then their knowledge and attitude can be improved.

The use of MCH handbook have contributed for the progress of maternal and child health in the country. Such as improvement of immunization and nutrition education, iodine deficiency reduction which in turn contributes the quality of the services. As we know the quality is important now because the level of education of people has increased, so all the educated people need quality services. So these are the benefits of using the MCH handbook in MCH program.

However there are still a lot of challenges. The most important challenge is how to keep the program sustainable. So, sustainability of the program is really important for this and a lot of advice had been given. The most important thing is to include the government, and the government

should include the program into the routine activities on MCH activities implemented in the country.



On the second day of conference 9 countries’ reports were presented, presentation title and presenters names are as follows-

1. MCH Handbook -Rational in Mongolia by Dr. *G.Soyolgerel*, Mongolia 2. Child Health Handbook in Mahajanga Madagascar by Dr. *Norotiana Rabesandratana*, Madagascar 3. Country Report on MCH situation and MCH Hand Book in Lao PDR by Dr. *Chandavone Phoxay*, Lao PDR 4. Maternal and Child Health and the MCH Handbook in the Philippines by Assoc. Prof. *Marilyn Crisostomo*, Philippines 5. Cambodian MCH Handbook by Mr. *Hang Vuthy*, Cambodia 6. Maternal and Child Health Program in Dominican Republic by *Maria Morfe*, Dominican Republic 7. Development of MCH Handbook in Palestine by *Assad Ramlawi*, Palestine 8. MCH Handbook of Utah: Baby Your Baby Health Keepsake by *Marie Nagata*, USA 9. Maternal and Child Health Handbook in Japan by *Noriko Toyama*, Japan.

Plenary Session:

There were 3 plenary speakers at the 6th International Conference on MCH Handbook; Presentation title and Presenter(s) as follows- 1. Introduction and Evaluation of MCH Handbook Program presented by Dr. *Agustin Kusumayati* of Indonesia 2. MCH Handbook and International Collaboration presented by *Keiko Osaki*, from JICA 3. Research Evidence

on MCH Handbook presented by Dr. *Rintaro Mori* from Japan.

Hitachiomiya Field Visit:

Hitachiomiya city was created in 2004 by merging of two towns and three villages. The city has a population of 46,435 people (male 22,715; female 23,720 as of October 2008), with an area of 348.38km² and a total of 16,292 households. Hitachiomiya is located on the northwest side of Ibaraki prefecture and within 2 hours driving distance from Tokyo.



Hitachiomiya launched the Maternal and Child Health Plan (2007-2011) with the purpose of “Developing a community of healthy mothers and children”. In this city parents are encouraged to obtain their “Parents and Children Health Handbook (PCHH)” by week 11th of the pregnancy and to comply with all the health checkups during pregnancy and breastfeeding; besides, the city conducts healthy child-rearing classes and public health nurses and nutritionists provide orientation during home visiting on a permanent basis.

The opportunity for mothers to pass wisdom and culture to their daughters is rare nowadays. With the idea of “rearing” parents while they are raising their children Hitachiomiya developed their version of PCHH. A multidisciplinary group of professionals related to maternal and child health (public health nurses, nutritionists, and nursery and special education teachers) gathered together to develop the handbook.

The process took one year; they also received valuable advice from Ms. Masako Kobayashi from the National Institute of Public Health. The PCHH is being used since July 2004.



Characteristics of the Hitachiomiya City “Parents and Children Health Handbook”-It’s 112 pages (a) kept some pages to record growth until the user becomes 20 years old (b) there are more spaces than usual for parents to write down messages for their children (c) a page for father’s message has been included to foster fathers’ participation (d) contents are indexed by period: pregnancy, breastfeeding and infancy. At present, the PCHH is being used as an educational material for all junior high school students. In the near future, all primary and junior high school students will use their handbooks with their personal health information as an educational material.



Purpose of the Field Visit:

The purpose of the field visit are to learn from the opinions of people from different backgrounds with regards to the use of the Parents and Children Health Handbook

(PCHH) and to observe its current usage in the community; to learn the experience in developing the PCHH for long-term usage; to observe the actual situation of the Healthy Infant Checkup system in Japan and to consider the implication in the participant's country; to learn about the Japanese maternal and child health problems (breastfeeding, low birth weight babies, child rearing, etc.) and to consider the implication in each country.

Total 45 international delegates visited Hitachiomiya Saiseikai Regional Hospital.



After a brief lecture on Pediatric Medical Services in a Regional Institution by Dr. *Hideki Kumagai* MD, PhD, participants visited different facilities of that hospital. Followed by the hospital visit participants moved to a community health center to observe MCH handbook activities at health center level as well as witness of other related activities there. Cordial welcome and hospitality were offered by Hitachiomiya City Mayor Mr. Mitsugi Shinichiro. Local Health Promotion Center Chief Mr. Osamu Yokoyama and other local staff also briefly demonstrated regarding ongoing activities providing by the center. Latter all participants observed 8-month old children orientation visit activities and enjoyed chat with parents who are long-term users of the PCHH.

Future Challenges:

MCH handbook program, as evidence indicates, would be the most effective information tool when health professionals and health volunteers show active participation and when health care delivery systems exist. The contents should be appropriate according to the community, so that it can be introduced into the community, self-reliance and self determination of community workers should be at place, and the written message should be understandable by majority of the workers. Moreover, when there are many illiterate people, MCH handbook should have many pictures and figures. Utilization, training and management of MCH handbook program as well as collaboration between stakeholders i.e. GO-NGOs, professional and development partners are also crucial to expand and sustainable development of MCH Handbook initiative in the world for ensuring the quality of life through MCH Handbook.

The next 7th International Conference on MCH Handbook will be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2010. We also plan to establish an international committee for promoting MCH handbook to ensure the quality of lives of mothers and children in near future.

If you are interested in MCH Handbook Program, please contact us for more details:

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