

Missed Opportunities in First Trimester Antenatal Care in Nepal

Introduction

One-third of pregnant people in Nepal are accessing antenatal care later than the first trimester.¹ Utilisation of timely antenatal care has been identified as key to facilitating healthy pregnancies worldwide by enabling screening and interventions that are most effective in the first trimester. This study aimed to identify the missed opportunities faced by those who attend antenatal care late. It aimed to explore some of the factors behind late attendance and consider potential solutions for minimizing these missed opportunities in the future.

Methods

A qualitative focus group study of postnatal people and staff with individual stakeholder interviews

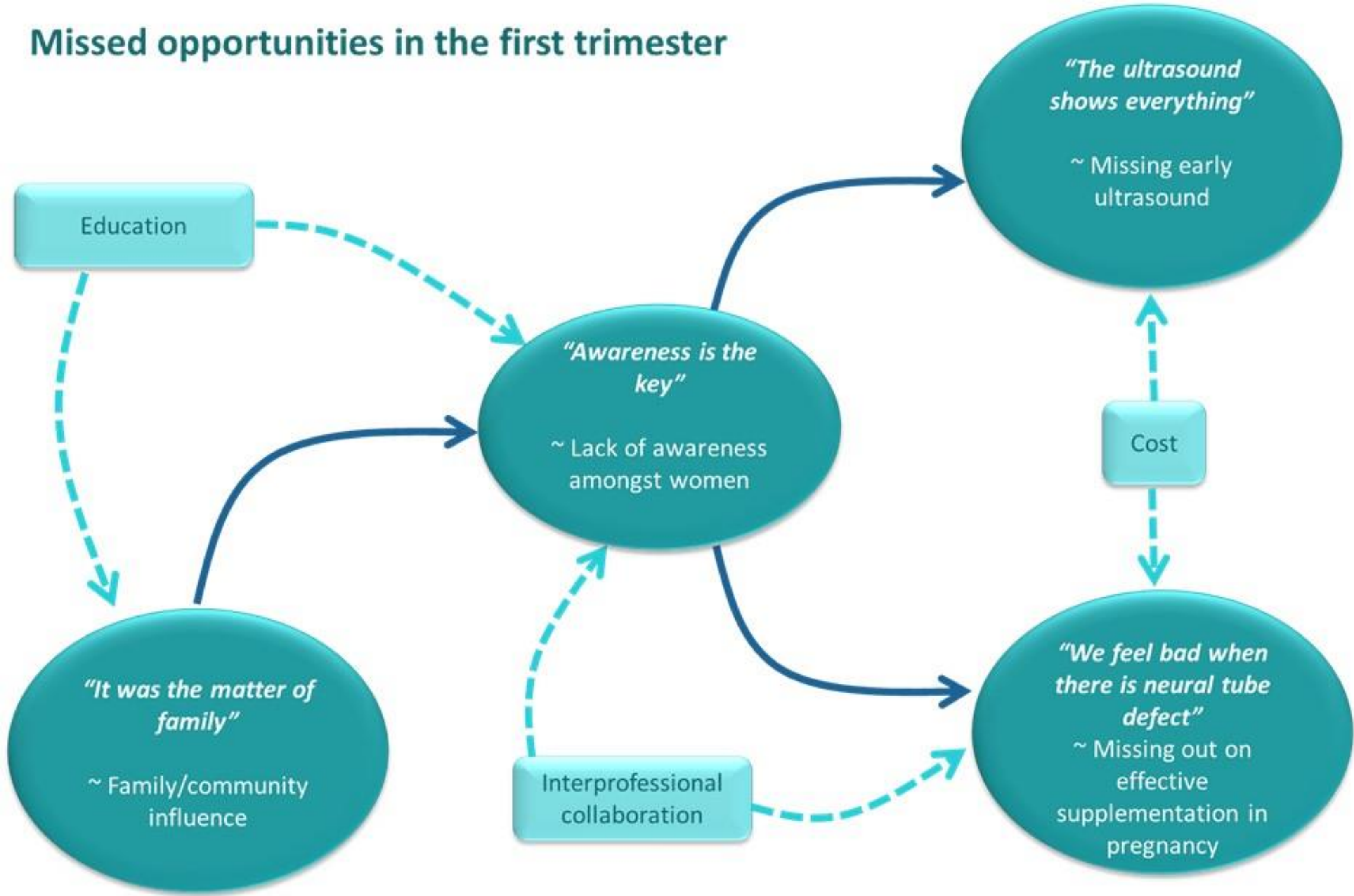
The study took place in 3 hospitals in Nepal: a referral, a district, and a private hospital. Focus groups (n=18) included 48 postnatal people and 49 staff in addition to 10 individual interviews with stakeholders. Purposive sampling facilitated a full range of maternity experiences, staff categories and stakeholder positions. No one approached by the research team refused to participate or dropped out. Initial thematic analysis was carried out by the core research team followed by a further in-depth analysis of this specific area using the predetermined lens of missed opportunities in the first trimester.

Conclusion

Limited awareness continues to drive late attendance to antenatal care. Investment in services in the first trimester and community health education campaigns are needed to improve this and enhance maternal and neonatal outcomes. However, potential interventions, such as community health education campaigns, must encompass the family and community too. Only then, can the full potential of timely ANC be realised for enhancing maternal and neonatal outcomes.

Thematic map showing the connections between the four themes (oval shapes) and some potential interventions (blue boxes) identified from discussions.

Missed opportunities in the first trimester



Discussion

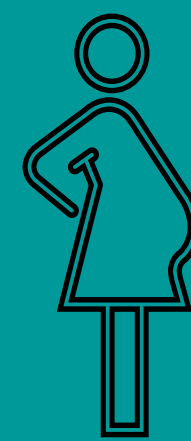
Limited awareness amongst pregnant people of the importance of early antenatal care was reported as a key factor for late attendance and was the central theme identified. Limited awareness fed into the influence of the family and community and drove the major missed opportunities, which were identified as early ultrasound scanning and effective supplementation in pregnancy. Increasing awareness, reducing cost, and enhancing interprofessional collaboration were suggested as potential methods for improving timely antenatal care.

Timing of first antenatal care visit in Nepal¹

First Trimester

After the first trimester

2/3



1/3

