

# Optimizing Emergency Obstetric Care in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan: Addressing Barriers, Bridging Knowledge Gaps, and Insights from Doctors

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**Objective:** To assess the knowledge, performance, & barriers related to Emergency Obstetric Care (EmOC) among doctors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, focusing on consultants and Woman Medical Officers (WMOs) to identify gaps and challenges affecting maternal health outcomes.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional survey (July 2017–December 2020) among 153 doctors (41 consultants, 112 WMOs). Structured questionnaires assessed EmOC knowledge, signal functions, and perceived barriers. Data compared EmOC knowledge and performance between the groups.

| EmOC Component              |                                                         | Findings/Observations                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EmOC knowledge              | Components of EMoC (Basic & Comprehensive)              | Both Consultants & WMOs had Poor knowledge                                                                                            |
|                             | EmOC indicators<br>Complications, C-sections, mortality | Consultants had better knowledge                                                                                                      |
|                             | Birth indicators                                        | WMOs had better knowledge                                                                                                             |
| Signal Function Performance |                                                         | Consultants outperforming WMOs in the use of Oxytocin, anticonvulsants, manual placental removal, blood transfusion, and antibiotics. |

## Barriers to EmOC Implementation

**Infrastructure:** Staff shortages, Transport

**Financial:** Weak salary structures

**Geographical:** Remote postings

**Institutional:** Lack of political support, Strict policies

**Conclusion:** This study highlights significant gaps in EmOC knowledge and performance among healthcare providers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Improving maternal outcomes requires targeted, competency-based training, improved rural infrastructure, and stronger institutional support to enhance EmOC delivery and reduce maternal mortality.