

## Advanced Neonatal Training Course Options for South Africa

### **How much progress is being made in neonatal care?**

The under-five infant mortality rate has dropped substantially in some developing countries thanks to new technologies and advanced training courses. But the neonatal and the early neonatal rates have declined at a much slower pace, especially when infants are in the first week of life. According to a new study by the Medical Research Council (MRC), over 4 million babies die during the first four weeks of life worldwide and the same report found that 23,000 of them die in South Africa every year and that number does not include the 500,000 first day babies that die at home without care. The report, *Saving Babies 2003-2005*, was based on data voluntarily submitted by healthcare workers across South Africa.

In order to reduce the number of neonatal deaths, education must be provided not only for parents in South Africa, but for neonatal care professionals. Some provinces in SA have higher infant death rates than others. Professor Anthony Mbweu, who was involved in the MRC study, said that the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga have an infant death rate that is twice as high as the richer provinces of the Western Cape and Gauteng. Access to appropriate health care services is a fundamental human right and it is an obligation for governments, and health organizations to provide the essential resources to enjoy that right. All countries should foster conditions that are essential to survival and a healthy life.

The same study also reports that in South Africa, one in five infant deaths can be avoided by implementing inexpensive changes in healthcare and providing ongoing training courses for neonatal care professionals. Without additional neonatal training, 21 babies out of every 1,000 babies born will die within the first 4 weeks of life. In order to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG), the authors of the study noted that South Africa must reduce their infant mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015. That means the structure of the health system must be reorganized, so it functions more effectively for infants under five, as well as for neonatal infants who need special attention.

### **What advanced neonatal training course options are available?**

Although PEP has helped train neonatal staff in SA, other training courses are needed to compliment and advance the knowledge and skills of neonatal health professionals. There is a serious need for effective regional perinatal outreach education programmes in South Africa. These programmes should include topics ranging from preconception to postpartum, as well as early infant care. Various formats are available and they should reach as many professionals as possible, as quickly as possible. The expense and the time involved in this advanced training courses should not be restricted by budget cuts or other factors.

Neonatal Outreach Programmes like Australia's [Monash University](#)'s postgraduate training program is making a difference in neonatal training in over 117 different countries. Their neonatal programme offers professionals in other countries the

opportunity to apply new technology and knowledge to existing conditions to achieve positive results.

Several other advanced neonatal online courses are offered by the [University Of Indiana School Of Nursing](#), the [Stanford University Volunteer Program](#) and companies like [CertFast Testing](#), [Emergency Medical Consultants Inc](#) and [Health Forces](#). [Sapporo City Institute of Public Health](#) in Japan, also offers neonatal training courses once a year to countries like South Africa, that need advanced training that's not available locally. [Laerdal Solutions](#) also has an online training program that can be used to reduce the mortality rate. [MedSenses Nursing Courses](#) is another online source for advanced neonatal training.

Since neonatal care is such an important part of the healthcare system, more training programmes are being introduced constantly. The world is addressing this issue as a connected group, so infant care, especially in the first 4 weeks is better understood and more manageable in every corner of the world.

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