

**COMPETENCE OF MIDWIVES REGARDING PREVENTION OF LOW APGAR
SCORE AMONG NEONATES**

by

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ABSTRACT

The practice of obstetric nursing requires a midwife practitioner who is competent and practises independently in providing antenatal services during pregnancy, the progress of labour and conducts delivery on her own for a normal healthy baby with an Apgar score of 10/10 at one minute after birth. Mismanagement of labour and lack of delivery technique commonly lead to a low Apgar score of 7 or less at 5 minutes. The incidences of high or low statistics of babies born with low Apgar scores depend upon the competence of midwives in the management process prior to conception, during pregnancy, labour and neonatal care.

The purpose of the study was to assess the competence of midwives regarding the prevention of low Apgar scores among neonates. The objectives of the study were to determine the competence of midwives with regard to the prevention of low Apgar scores, to assess the knowledge of midwives regarding the prevention of low Apgar scores among neonates and to determine the opinions of midwives regarding the prevention of low Apgar scores among neonates.

The study was designed as a quantitative, descriptive research which was conducted to determine the competence of midwives regarding the prevention of low Apgar scores among neonates in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province. A representative sample of 100 midwives working in the maternity units of three district hospitals was selected. Data was collected in March 2007 to April 2007. A self-administered questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions was used to collect data. Participants were selected using a nonprobability purposive sampling method. The findings revealed that midwives perceived themselves to be competent in performing most of the midwifery skills and furthermore knew how to perform some of the skills related to midwifery care. However, they perceived themselves to be incompetent in performing some critical skills and lacking in knowledge of some skills related to midwifery care such as taking and recording blood pressure correctly.

One of the recommendations of the study was that standardised clinical guidelines should be included in the structured learning curriculum for undergraduate nurses. The recommendations were relevant to midwifery practice, nursing management and nursing education, and included recommendations for future research. The problem of low Apgar score needs to be researched in order to find solutions to it as it may have an impact on the midwives who are responsible for maternal and childcare services, parents of babies with low Apgar scores, the community and the Government, and the Department of Health concerned.