

# **PERINATAL AND NEONATAL MORTALITY RATES AND CAUSES OF DEATH AT MARMARA UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** The aim of our study was to establish the stillbirth, early and late neonatal mortality and perinatal mortality rates at Marmara University Hospital and to compare the rates with those of other countries.

**Methods:** We evaluated the mothers who gave birth at Marmara University Hospital and their infants prospectively for two years from January 1998 to January 2000. The causes of perinatal deaths were grouped according to the modified Wigglesworth Classification. Maternal risk factors were ascertained.

**Results:** The stillbirth rate was 15.1%, early and late neonatal mortality rates were 3.8 % and 2.8% respectively, and the perinatal mortality rate was 18.8% in our hospital. The mean gestational age of the neonates who died perinatally in the perinatal period was  $26.8 \pm 1.2$  weeks. In this group, 68% of the mothers did not receive any antenatal care. Sixty percent of their mothers were primipar and 40% were multipar. The most common cause of death was hypoxia during the intrauterine period and preterm labor and delivery. The total number of deliveries in our hospital was 1060 in two years and 19% of the mothers had high risk pregnancy. The average

number of preterm delivery was 37 (7.9% of all deliveries) per year of which 13 (2.5%) had a birth weight of less than 1500 grams.

**Conclusion:** The perinatal mortality rate at our hospital (18.8 %) is lower than that of the world (53 %) but higher than the rate of the developed countries (10 %). The perinatal mortality rates of the other hospitals in Turkey are between 11.9-108 %. Systematic antenatal care should be applied all around the country, high risk pregnancies should be managed at the tertiary care hospitals with intensive care units and the number of neonatal intensive care unit beds should be increased.

**Key Words:** Perinatal mortality rate, Neonatal mortality rate, Antenatal care.

## **INTRODUCTION**

It is important to determine the perinatal mortality rate and causes of death in order to develop the national and regional health policy. The perinatal and neonatal mortality rates are good indicators of the level of practice of obstetric medicine and neonatology (1). The aim of our study was to establish the stillbirth, early and late neonatal

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mortality and perinatal mortality rate at Marmara University Hospital and to compare the rates with those of other countries.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

We evaluated the mothers who gave birth at Marmara University Hospital and their infants prospectively for two years from January 1998 to January 2000. Stillbirth was defined as the infants born at a gestational age of more than 22 weeks and birth weight of more than 500 grams but did not have a heart rate or respiratory effort and did not respond to resuscitation (2). Live birth was defined as infants who had a birth weight of 500 grams and had a heart beat and respiration at birth. Death in 7 days after birth was defined as early neonatal death, death between 8 and 28 days after birth was defined as late neonatal death. Perinatal mortality rate was calculated as the ratio of stillbirths and early neonatal deaths to the total number of births (2).

The causes of perinatal deaths were grouped according to the modified Wigglesworth Classification (Table I) (1, 2). Maternal risk factors were ascertained. Late neonatal mortality rate was established by calling the mothers of all the infants who gave birth in our hospital to determine infants' status at 28 days of age.

**Table I.:** Modified Wigglesworth classification (1,2)

- Group 1:** Deaths before the onset of labor
  - Group 2:** Lethal congenital malformation
  - Group 3:** Complications of preterm delivery
    - Hyaline membrane disease
    - Intraventricular hemorrhage
    - Nonspecific infections of premature infants
  - Group 4:** Deaths from hypoxia during labor and delivery
  - Group 5:** Some special causes\*
  - Group 6:** All infections of term infants and specific infections of premature infants
  - Group 7:** Unknown causes and miscellaneous causes of deaths
- \* Special causes: Blood type isoimmunizations, congenital metabolic diseases, transfusion syndrome, hydrops fetalis due to a variety of causes other than malformations, diseases of term infants as RDS and NEC, tumors.

## RESULTS

The total number of deliveries in our hospital was 1060 in two years and 19% of these mothers had risk factors such as preeclampsia, placenta abnormalities or chronic maternal diseases. The average number of preterm deliveries was 37 (7.9% of all deliveries) per year of which 13 (2.5%) infants had a birth weight of less than 1500 grams. The congenital malformation prevalence in our hospital was 9% which included infants with congenital heart disease (2), cleft lip and palate (2), spina bifida (3), anencephaly (1), and one infant with multiple anomaly (hydrocephaly and multicystic renal disease). Two mothers had termination of pregnancy at 18 and 20 weeks of gestation because of congenital malformation (hydrocephaly and spina bifida) and congenital CMV infection respectively.

Stillbirth rate was 15.1 %, early and late neonatal mortality rates were 3.8 % and 2.8 % respectively, perinatal mortality rate was 18.8 % in our hospital. The mean gestational age of neonates who died perinatally in the perinatal period was  $26.8 \pm 1.2$  weeks. In this group 68% of mothers did not receive antenatal care. Sixty percent of their mothers were primipar and 40% were multipar. The causes of death of infants are shown in Table II. Most commonly, deaths occurred before the onset of labor. (52.2% of all deaths). Preterm delivery complications were the second most common cause of death. The mean birth weight of infants who died after preterm delivery was  $800 \pm 150$  grams (645-950 grams).

**Table II.:** Causes of deaths according to the classification of modified Wigglesworth classification.

Cause of death	Number (n)	%
<b>Group 1</b>	12	52.2
<b>Group 2</b>	1	4.3
<b>Group 3</b>	5	21.7
<b>Group 4</b>	4	17.5
<b>Group 5</b>	0	0
<b>Group 6</b>	1	4.3
<b>Group 7</b>	0	0

The total number of deliveries = 1060 (in 1998-1999)

Stillbirth rate = 15.1 % (n= 16)

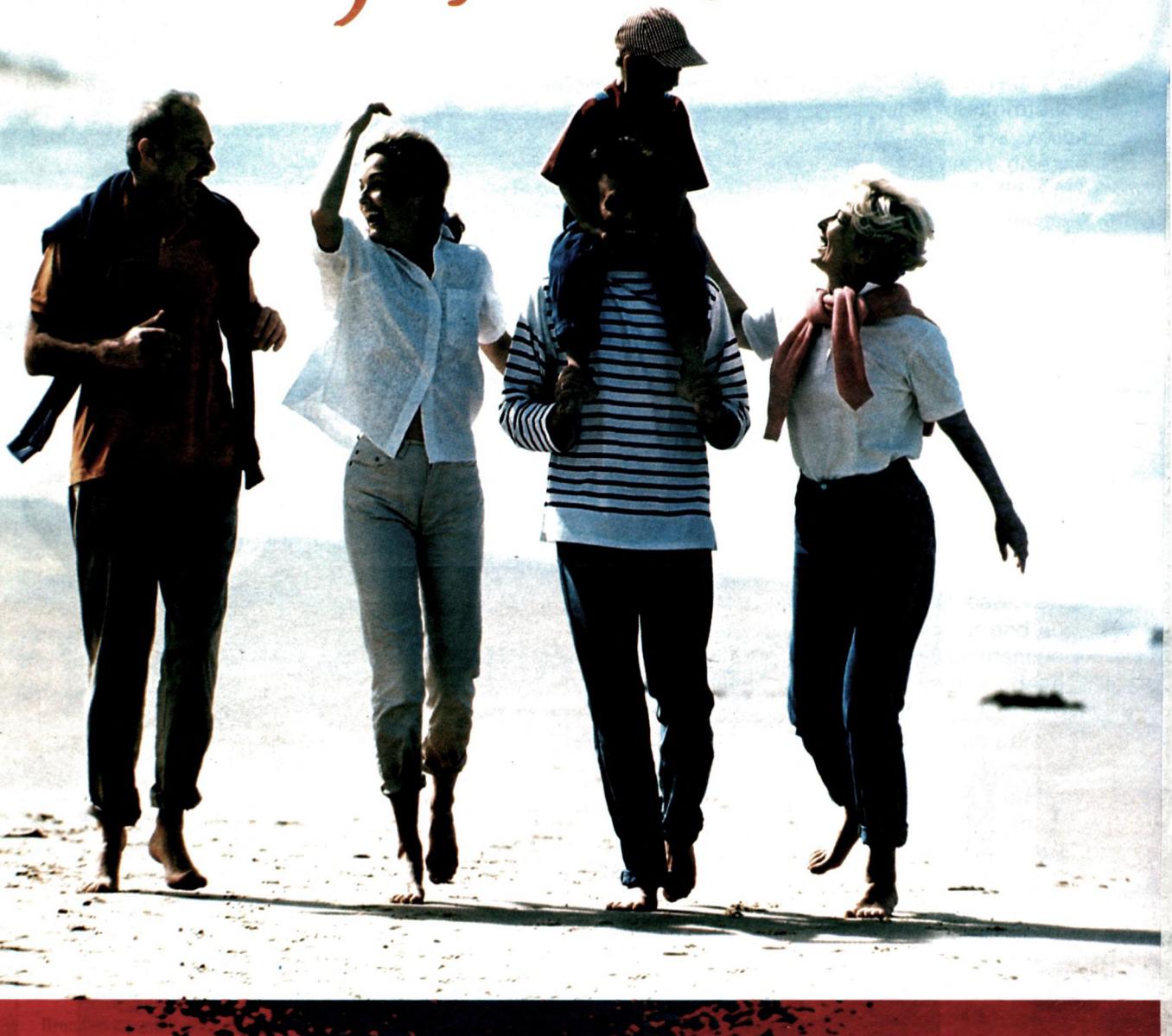
Early neonatal mortality rate = 3.8 % (n= 4)

Late neonatal mortality rate = 2.8 % (n= 3)

Perinatal mortality rate = 18.8 % (n= 20)



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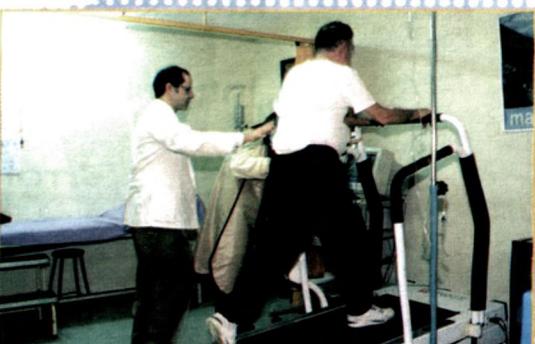
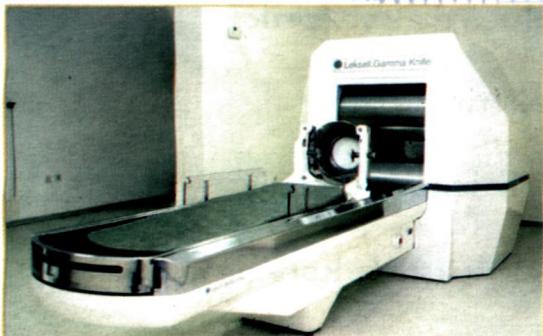
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## DISCUSSION

In developing countries, about 50% of infant deaths occur during the neonatal period and commonly in the first week of life (1-3). Most of the infants die from preventable perinatal problems. Deaths during the perinatal period reflect quality and adequacy of the care given to the mother and the infant during antenatal, intrapartum and early neonatal period.

Perinatal mortality rate can be decreased with optimal antenatal care for maternal problems such as infection, hypertension. Perinatal mortality rate of our hospital (18.8 %) is lower than that of the world (53 %) but higher than the rate of developed countries (10 %) (1-3). The perinatal mortality rates of the other hospitals in Turkey are between 11.9-108 % (Table III) (4). Perinatal mortality is due to unpreventable causes (congenital malformations, inborn errors of metabolism etc.) in developed countries

**Table III:** PMR and NMR at the hospitals other than the Marmara University Hospital in Turkey in 1999 (3).

	PMR (%)	NMR (%)
Başkent University Hospital	11.9	6.0
Dokuz Eylül University Hospital	19.2	3.2
Hacettepe University Hospital	21.5	6.8
Bakırköy Maternity and Teaching Hospital	23.5	12.7
Ankara University Hospital	24.6	6.9
Zekai Tahir Burak Maternity and Teaching Hospital	26.9	11.9
Akdeniz University Hospital	29.7	15.7
Ege University Hospital	30.7	13.5
Zeynep Kamil Maternity and Teaching Hospital	47.3	32.3
Trakya University Hospital	51.0	30.0
Çukurova University Hospital	58.2	10.9
Selçuk University Hospital	62.0	30.4
Fırat University Hospital	63.0	39.0
19 Mayıs University Hospital	68.0	20.2
Atatürk University Hospital	70.2	16.4
Istanbul University Hospital	70.9	34.6
Osmangazi University Hospital	107.6	56.8

PMR: perinatal mortality rate; NMR: neonatal mortality rate.

whereas preventable causes (infections, asphyxia, etc.) make up the majority in developing countries. Perinatal mortality can be decreased by reducing the number of inutero or intrapartum deaths. Antenatal deaths are 52.2 % of all perinatal deaths in our hospital and this reflects the importance of antenatal care. In our study group, 68% of mothers whose infants died during the perinatal period did not receive antenatal care. It is possible to reduce the total number of high risk pregnancies with a well-organized fetal-maternal assessment program covering the whole region.

Seventy to eighty percent of preterm deliveries can be ascertained before delivery and have a chance of maternal transport to tertiary hospitals (4). The neonatal mortality rate of our country can be reduced by transport of high risk pregnancies to the tertiary centers that have neonatal intensive care units. The decline in perinatal and neonatal mortality rates in the 1980s in U.S.A. is a result of the development of the concept of regionalization (5-7). Preterm delivery and low birthweight are major causes of both neonatal mortality and long term disability (8,9). In our hospital 17.5 % of infants died of hypoxia during preterm labor and delivery. Most of these mothers presented with vaginal bleeding due to placenta previa and ablatio placenta and their infants could not be saved. During the study period 21.7 % of infants who died had birthweights ranging between 645 to 950 grams and died of prematurity. The perinatal mortality rate can be further reduced by using new technological methods in neonatal intensive units. Neonatal mortality has fallen by 36% in the 24-36 weeks of gestation groups amongst Scottish preterm singleton births between 1985 and 1994 (10). This dramatic decline is a good example of the progress in neonatology.

In conclusion, to improve the perinatal and neonatal mortality rate in our country to that of the developed countries, our society should become conscious about family planning and the importance of antenatal care. Systematic antenatal care should be applied all around the country, high risk pregnancies should be managed at the tertiary care hospitals with intensive care units and the number of neonatal intensive care unit beds should be increased.

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