

**Poor quality of antenatal care services- Is lack of competence and support the reason?
An observational and interview study in rural areas of Lao PDR**

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

To explore the health-care providers' performance and their own perceptions of the ANC services they provide.

DESIGN, SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS:

This cross-sectional exploratory survey was carried out in 2009 at four district hospitals and 18 health centres in Khammouane and Champasack provinces in rural areas of Laos.

MEASUREMENTS AND FINDINGS:

Combinations of quantitative and qualitative methods were used: (i) 59 observations of ANC sessions (components performed and equipment used); (ii) 26 semi-structured interviews with health-care providers engaged in ANC services, interpreted through content analysis. The findings indicated an overall poor quality and performance of ANC services in rural health facilities with lack of routines, scarce or insufficient equipment and limited skills among providers. The health-care providers gave an often pessimistic picture of their competence and motivation to work with ANC. Some articulated a resignation due to lack of feedback from the patients and they expressed a need for support from health-care superiors. Compared to the district hospitals, the health centres were less well-equipped and supplied, and the providers had a heavier workload, because all activities including ANC were carried out by the same provider. The average consultation time for each woman was 5mins.

CONCLUSIONS:

The quality of ANC services in rural health facilities in Laos was poor due to lack of resources, the providers' limited skills concurrent with inadequate routines and insufficient backup from superiors.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE:

To comply with national and international recommendations for ANC services, our suggestion is to improve the quality of the rural health facilities in Laos by providing basic equipment, support from experienced superiors and in-service training.

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22776568>