Effectiveness of Hands on skill training programme regarding management of specific childhood illnesses on the competencies of female health workers

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ABSTRACT

Background
Under five children are most vulnerable to the vicious cycles of disease/infection and resultant disability. Among the total Indian population, 9.7% belongs to the age group of 0–4 years. 10.3% of under five population is residing in rural and 8% are residing in urban areas. Most of the child deaths are from common, preventable and easily treatable childhood diseases. A large proportion of these deaths could be prevented through early, appropriate and low-cost treatment in the home or community. Female Health Workers (FHWs) in the state of Tamilnadu offer easy access to health services especially in rural areas. They have been used successfully in various programmes. The present study was conducted with the aim to evaluate the effectiveness of Hands on Skill Training Programme regarding management of specific childhood illnesses on the competencies of Female Health Workers in selected Primary Health Centres of Salem district, Tamilnadu.

Methods
A Quasi experimental study was conducted among 160 FHWs who are working in the selected Primary Health Centres of Salem district, Tamilnadu. The FHWs who are working in the PHCs under 10 Community Health Blocks of Salem district were selected through the non-probability convenience sampling technique. These 10 Community Health Blocks were divided into two halves of having five blocks in each. 80 FHWs in one half (5 blocks) were allocated to experimental group and the remaining 80 in other half (remaining 5 blocks) were allocated to control group by flipping the coin. Pretest on competency of FHWs regarding management of specific childhood illnesses (respiratory tract infection, diarrhea, fever, malnutrition, ear infection, eye infection, worm infestation, and scabies) was done in terms of sum of overall knowledge, attitude and skill. The subjects were assessed using Structured Questionnaire, Likert Attitude Scale and Observation Checklists for skill performance in OSCE. After pretest, the experimental group had received Hands on Skill Training Programme regarding management of specific childhood illnesses for three consecutive days (2-3 hours/day). No intervention was given to control group. The post-test was conducted after four weeks.

Results
The pretest findings revealed that majority of the FHWs had moderately adequate knowledge, moderately favourable attitude and inadequate skill regarding management of specific childhood illnesses. Their overall competency was low among majority of the subjects. In post-test, majority of the FHWs in experimental group had gained adequate knowledge, favourable attitude, adequate skill and high competency compared to the subjects in control group. Between
group comparison revealed that both the groups had similar competency scores in terms of overall knowledge, attitude and skill during the pretest. But the post-test comparison showed a highly significant improvement in knowledge, attitude, skill and overall competency at p<0.001 in experimental group compared to control group.

A positive relationship was noted between knowledge, attitude and skill during pretest and post-test among subjects in both the groups. It reveals that the dependent variables are influencing each other in positive direction. A significant association was found between age and competency in experimental group. In control group, significant associations were found between special/additional course with knowledge and competency; general educational qualification and attitude; religion and skill; and marital status and competency.

**Conclusion**
This study demonstrated that the Hands on Skill Training Programme is effective in improving the competencies of Female Health Workers on management of specific childhood illnesses. It emphasizes the need for regular performance appraisal and training regarding management of common prevalent diseases for Female Health Workers. India is the country with largest population of under five children in the world, therefore the present study is beneficial to the under five children who are frequently affected by easily preventable common childhood illnesses.

**Key words:** Knowledge; attitude; skill; competency; childhood illnesses; Hands on Skill Training Programme; Female Health Workers.