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The unfinished work of neonatal very low birthweight infants quality improvement: Improving outcomes at a continental level in South America

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Abstract

Neonatal mortality rate varies between 4.2 and 18.6 per thousand by country in South America. There is little information regarding the outcomes of very low birth weight infants in the region and mortality rates are extremely variable ranging from 6% to over 50%. This group may represent up to 50-70% of the neonatal mortality and approximately 25-30% of infant mortality. Some initiatives, like the NEOCOSUR Network, have systematically collected and analyzed epidemiological information on VLBW infants' outcomes in the region. Over a 16-year period, survival without major morbidity improved from 37 to 44%. However, mortality has remained almost unchanged at approximately 27%, despite an increase in the implementation of the best available evidence in perinatal practices over time. Implementing quality improvement initiatives in the continent is particularly challenging but represents a great opportunity considering that there is a wide margin for progress in both care and outcomes.

Keywords: Newborn; Prematurity; Quality improvement; Very low birth weight infant.

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