Developing Strategies to Reduce Cesarean Delivery Rates in Iran 2012-2014: A Mixed Methods Study

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Context and Objectives: With the change in population policy from birth control toward encouraging birth and population growth in Iran, repeated cesarean deliveries as a main reason of cesarean section are associated with more potential adverse consequences. The aim of this research was to explore effective strategies to reduce elective cesarean delivery rates in Iran.

Methods: A mixed methodological study was designed and implemented. First, using a qualitative approach, concepts and influencing factors of increased cesarean delivery were explored. Based on the findings of this phase of study a questionnaire including the proposed strategies to reduce cesarean delivery was developed. Then in a quantitative phase the questionnaire was assessed by key informants from across the country and evaluated to obtain more effective strategies to reduce cesarean delivery. Ten participants in the qualitative study included policy makers from the Ministry of Health, obstetricians, midwives and anthropologists. In the next step 141 participants from private and public hospitals, insurance experts, Academic Associations of Midwifery and policy makers in Maternity Health Affairs of Ministry of Health were invited to assess and provide feedback on the strategies that work to reduce cesarean deliveries.

Results: Qualitative data analysis showed four concept related to increased cesarean delivery rates including; "standardization", "education", "amending regulations", and "performance supervision". Effective strategies extracted from qualitative data were rated by participants then, using ACCEPT table 19 strategies were detected as priorities. Conclusion: Although achieving to effective strategies to reduce cesarean delivery rates is complex process because of the multi-factorial nature of increased cesarean deliveries, but in this study we have achieved to strategies that in the context of Iran could work.

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