

Strategy for global rollout and scale of 7.1% chlorhexidine for umbilical cord care

Health Need

A recently cut umbilical cord is an entry point for bacteria that can cause newborn sepsis and death. Ensuring optimal cord care at birth and in the first week of life, especially in settings with poor hygiene, is a crucial strategy in preventing life-threatening sepsis and cord infections and in averting preventable neonatal deaths. Chlorhexidine digluconate is a widely used, low-cost antiseptic effective against major agents of neonatal infection. A novel formulation for umbilical cord care, 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate (delivering 4% chlorhexidine), has been shown through clinical trials to reduce the risk of death by up to 23% and eliminates two-thirds to three-quarters of serious umbilical infections within the first 28 days of life. Further, the clinical trials and concurrent research have proven 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate to be an efficacious, acceptable, feasible, and cost-effective newborn care intervention.

Vision

The global Chlorhexidine Working Group (CWG) is an international collaboration of organizations committed to advancing the use of 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate (delivering 4% chlorhexidine) for umbilical cord care through advocacy and technical assistance. We believe that chlorhexidine for umbilical cord care should be implemented globally as part of a comprehensive national newborn strategy designed to improve newborn health.

Purpose

Our goal is to accelerate introduction and global scale of chlorhexidine for umbilical cord care to at least ten countries by the year 2016. We will advance the use of 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate for umbilical cord care through advocacy and technical assistance to country-level efforts and maximizing sustainable benefit for public health by leveraging the expertise of members and partners in areas such as product development, manufacturing, supply chain, policy, regulatory, program design and implementation, quality assurance, and training.

Audience

The primary audiences of the CWG's global efforts to advance the use of 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate are ministries of health, donors, and other key stakeholders who are engaged in shaping the essential newborn care policies of their respective countries.

Target users of the chlorhexidine product are individuals/families who are involved in birth preparedness and/or birthing (i.e., birth attendants, families of pregnant women, pregnant women). The beneficiaries are newborns in settings with poor hygiene since their lives can be saved with this intervention.

Strategic goals

Goal 1: Increase awareness and use of 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate for umbilical cord care as part of essential newborn care by policymakers, birth attendants, and families.

Goal 2: Establish sustainable supply-side strategy to support the demand for 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate.

Goal 3: Generate increased demand at the global level to accelerate national scale-up.

Goal 4: Advocate for inclusion of chlorhexidine for umbilical cord care in global policy actions.

Values

Transparent collaboration: The global rollout of chlorhexidine is best achieved through transparent collaboration amongst all participants of the CWG. This collaboration is essential to achieving greater availability, accessibility, and affordability of the product.

Commitment to sharing resources: The CWG continues to build our expanding knowledge and implementation base by sharing resources to support the introduction and scale of chlorhexidine product worldwide.

Leadership

PATH serves as both the secretariat of the global CWG and convener of the chlorhexidine technical reference team for the UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children. PATH leads the CWG to identify and coordinate programmatic opportunities for chlorhexidine integration into global and regional platforms as well as build potential supplier bases for regional manufacturing and distribution.

Objectives and illustrative activities

Goal 1 objective:

Create an enabling policy and regulatory environment to increase introduction and uptake of a quality 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate product for umbilical cord care at country level.

- Prioritize countries where 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate might show greatest health impact.
- Develop procurement guidance for government tenders and create a brief to describe differences among dosage forms.
- Coalesce vision and provide guidance around appropriate product packaging.

Goal 2 objective:

Establish local/regional production capacity for an affordable and quality product to increase the availability of and access to 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate.

- Generate a realistic dialogue with countries about the benefits and risks of local production.

- Improve in-country technical and regulatory capacity to produce and market quality 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate (even in counties with relatively strong pharmaceutical industry).
- Support country-led initiatives to manufacture 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate for umbilical cord care in countries where local production is determined to be feasible.

Goal 3 objective:

Shape local/regional markets to increase use of 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate for umbilical cord care.

- Monitor and plan for coordinated introduction and roll-out effort across key geographies.
- Coordinate technical meetings and undertake cost analysis in multiple scenarios to assist with decision-making around type of product (single container vs. bulk container, 1-day vs. 7-day application, and home vs. facility births).
- Integrate 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate for umbilical cord care into programmatic guidance and/or kits related to newborns in emergency/crisis settings.
- Accelerate replication of successful implementation models to other countries/regions.
- Support country-led initiatives to pilot and scale up 7.1% chlorhexidine digluconate for umbilical cord care.
- Create set of measurable outcomes for cord care intervention.
- Identify and set numerical target goals for CWG to monitor the progress of chlorhexidine implementation.

Goal 4 objective:

Advocate for an enabling policy environment for chlorhexidine for umbilical cord care programming worldwide.

- Raise awareness and action to integrate chlorhexidine in the Latin America and Caribbean region.
- Address recent World Health Organization recommendation that restricts chlorhexidine intervention to a specific setting.
- Bolster credibility of CWG by demonstrating range and breadth of organizational support and involvement.
- Expand supportive network to key regional stakeholders.

