

*Brief reports*

## Management and Policy of Gestational Hypertension at the Sentru Formosa Clinic, Dili – Timor Leste

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Gestational hypertension is a leading cause of maternal and fetal morbidity and mortality, particularly in developing countries like Timor-Leste. As a primary healthcare facility, the Sentru Formosa Clinic still faces various challenges in managing gestational hypertension. This study aim was to Analyze the management and policies for handling gestational hypertension at the Sentru Formosa Clinic and formulate recommendations for improvement based on evidence-based policies and practices.

**Method:** This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach through a literature review of WHO guidelines, ISSHP, and Timor Leste National Treatment Standards, as well as an analysis of the situation of antenatal care (ANC) services at the Sentru Formosa Clinic including the availability of facilities, clinical practices, and referral systems.

**Results:** Several key issues were identified, including limited screening tools, the lack of standardized standard operating procedures (SOPs), low healthcare worker capacity in handling severe cases, a suboptimal referral system, and a lack of education for pregnant women. These conditions have the potential to lead to delays in the detection and treatment of gestational hypertension.

**Conclusion:** Standardized operational policies are needed to improve the quality of screening, initial treatment, and referral systems for gestational hypertension. Implementing standard operating procedures (SOPs), increasing the capacity of healthcare workers, and strengthening the referral system are expected to reduce the risk of maternal and neonatal complications.

**Keywords:** Gestational hypertension, Health policy, ANC, Pregnancy management, Timor Leste

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### INTRODUCTION

Hypertension in pregnancy is defined as elevated blood pressure of  $\geq 140/90$  mmHg after 20 weeks of gestation. This condition includes gestational hypertension, preeclampsia, and eclampsia, which can lead to serious complications such as cerebral hemorrhage, organ failure, and even maternal and fetal death. Globally, hypertensive disorders in pregnancy account for approximately 14% of maternal deaths.

In Timor-Leste, maternal mortality remains high, and gestational hypertension is a major contributing factor. As a primary healthcare facility, the Sentru Formosa Clinic plays a crucial role in the early detection and treatment of gestational hypertension. However, limited resources and suboptimal operational policies pose challenges to providing quality services. Therefore, this article aims to examine the management and policies for gestational hypertension at the Sentru Formosa Clinic and formulate applicable policy recommendations.

### METHOD

This article uses a qualitative descriptive design based on policy analysis. Data were obtained through:

1. **Literature review**, including WHO guidelines, the International Society for the Study of Hypertension in Pregnancy (ISSHP), and the National Treatment Standards of Timor Leste.
2. **Situation analysis**, namely a review of the condition of ANC services at the Sentru Formosa Clinic, including the availability of medical devices, essential drugs, clinical practices, and referral mechanisms.

Data is analyzed narratively to identify gaps between ideal standards and current practices, and then policy recommendations are formulated.

## RESULTS

The results of the analysis showed several major problems in the management of gestational hypertension at the Sentru Formosa Clinic:

1. **Limited availability of screening tools**, such as calibrated blood pressure monitors and urine dipsticks, which are not always available.
2. **There is no standardized SOP**, so the treatment of pregnancy hypertension still varies between health workers.
3. **The capacity of health workers is not evenly distributed**, especially in handling serious cases and obstetric emergencies such as administering magnesium sulfate.
4. **The referral system is not optimal**, marked by a lack of documentation and communication with referral hospitals.
5. **Lack of education for pregnant women**, results in low awareness of the danger signs of pregnancy hypertension and the importance of regular ANC visits.

## DISCUSSION

The identified issues highlight a gap between international guidelines and primary care practices. The WHO and ISSHP emphasize the importance of blood pressure and urine protein screening at every ANC visit, as well as prompt treatment and timely referral for severe hypertension. Without clear SOPs and referral systems, the risk of delayed treatment increases, impacting maternal and fetal well-being.

Strengthening the capacity of healthcare workers through regular training and the provision of essential medicines is a key strategy for improving service quality. Furthermore, public education plays a crucial role in increasing ANC compliance and early detection of danger signs.

## CONCLUSION

Gestational hypertension is a serious maternal health problem at the Sentru Formosa Clinic. Standardized operational policies are needed to improve early detection, initial treatment, and referral systems for cases of gestational hypertension.

### **Recommendation:**

1. Implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for gestational hypertension at the clinic level.
2. Continuous provision of screening tools and essential medications.
3. Routine training for healthcare workers on hypertension management and obstetric emergencies.
4. Strengthening the referral system and case documentation.
5. Educating pregnant women about the danger signs of gestational hypertension.

## REFERENCE

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