

Public policies in Brazil: An analysis of prenatal care and prematurity



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ABSTRACT

This scientific article presents an analysis of public policies in Brazil related to prenatal care and prematurity. The study seeks to understand the government's approach to prenatal care offered to pregnant women and the impact of these policies on the incidence of premature births in the country. For this, a literature review was carried out, examining scientific studies and official documents that address the subject. The analysis revealed that prenatal care in Brazil is offered free of charge by

the Unified Health System (SUS) and aims to monitor pregnancy and identify possible complications early. However, despite efforts to improve access to and quality of prenatal care, there are still challenges to be faced, such as the need to improve the training of health professionals and the infrastructure of care units. Public policies for early intervention aim to minimize the impacts of prematurity, with actions that include adequate respiratory support, the promotion of breastfeeding, the prevention and treatment of infections, among other measures. Given the challenges identified, the study concludes that it is essential to improve public policies in Brazil for prenatal care and prematurity. Investments in training of health professionals, preventive actions and adequate support for pregnant women can contribute to reducing the incidence of premature births and improving the quality of life of babies and their families. In addition, the awareness of society about the importance of prenatal care and adequate care for premature babies is essential for the promotion of a more effective and comprehensive maternal and child health in the country.

Keywords: Prematurity, Public Health Policies, Neonatal care, Complications of prematurity.

1 INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive care for premature newborns is an issue of great relevance in the area of child health and well-being. Preterm birth, defined as birth before 37 weeks of gestation, is a complex challenge that requires interdisciplinary approaches, involving health professionals, adequate public policies and the awareness of society. The implications of practices and public policy in relation to the care of premature newborns are extremely important, as they directly influence the quality of life of these babies and their families (Klossowski *et al.*, 2015).

The premature newborn usually requires intensive multiprofessional health care in neonatal units, with a highly qualified team, including neonatologists, specialized nurses, physiotherapists, speech therapists, among others. The quality of this care and the availability of appropriate



technologies and resources can significantly impact the development of the premature baby (Oliveira, 2023).

Prenatal care is a crucial phase for the monitoring of the pregnant woman and the development of the fetus, being a time when regular medical consultations, examinations and guidelines are carried out to ensure a healthy and safe pregnancy for the mother and baby. The quality of prenatal care is directly related to the early diagnosis of possible complications, allowing the adoption of measures to reduce risks and treat health problems identified during pregnancy (Mendes; Alcantara, 2023).

In Brazil, the Unified Health System (SUS) offers free prenatal care to all pregnant women, through the Basic Health Units (UBS) and Health Centers. However, the effectiveness of this service may vary by region and resource availability. Public policies that aim to improve the training of health professionals, the infrastructure of care units and access to tests and medicines are fundamental to ensure the quality of prenatal care throughout the country (Oliveira, 2023).

Therefore, care for premature babies should occur in specialized neonatal units, where a multidisciplinary team provides intensive care. Measures such as respiratory support, proper nutrition, prevention and treatment of infections, developmental monitoring and therapeutic interventions are essential for the treatment and recovery of the premature baby. In addition, the promotion of breastfeeding is a crucial factor in improving the health of premature infants (Gonzaga *et al.*, 2016).

To reduce the incidence of prematurity, preventive actions are necessary. These actions include access to adequate prenatal care and control of modifiable risk factors, such as smoking and the use of illicit drugs during pregnancy. The encouragement of family planning and health policies that promote adequate care during pregnancy are fundamental in this context (Oliveira, 2023) Thus, considering the relevance of the subject, this study aims to discuss the existing public policies in Brazil in relation to prenatal care and its prematurity.

2 METHOD

It is a narrative review of the literature with a broad approach that aims to understand the development of a given subject, either from a theoretical or contextual perspective, through the investigation and analysis of the scientific production available in the literature (Brum *et al.*, 2015). This review provides a comprehensive compilation of information, addressing various topics and enabling the identification of knowledge gaps that may be useful to reorient public policies and support future research.

A search was performed from the following databases: Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (Lilacs), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and National Library of Medicine (PubMed). The keywords used were searched in the descriptor system (DeCS).



The terms selected for the search included: "prematurity", "public health policies", "neonatal care", "complications of prematurity".

These keywords were chosen with the objective of covering different aspects related to prematurity, including its definition, related health policies, neonatal care and associated complications. For each database, the appropriate Boolean operators (such as AND, OR) were used to combine the keywords appropriately and obtain relevant results. The search was carried out in order to cover studies published until the deadline of this research.

The identified studies were evaluated for their relevance to the objective of the review. In this stage, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to select the most pertinent studies. The inclusion criteria were articles published in their entirety, in the language Portuguese or English. Studies in which prematurity was related to previous genetic malformation or attempted termination of pregnancy were excluded. To select the articles, the titles were first read, and the abstracts were read later, and the articles that contemplated the proposed theme were selected.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To face prematurity, it is essential to invest in preventive actions, such as encouraging adequate prenatal care and access to family planning. The early identification of risk factors for preterm birth and the adoption of preventive measures can contribute to reducing preterm birth rates. With the studies analyzed, the main findings will be described and discussed below.

3.1 IMPORTANCE AND IMPACT OF PRENATAL CARE ON MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

The gestational period is a crucial phase in a woman's life, marked by significant physical, emotional and social transformations. During pregnancy, the woman's body undergoes adaptations to house and nurture the developing fetus, while the mind and emotions prepare for the role of mother. Maia *et al.* (2022, p. 02) highlight that "throughout the gestational period metabolic endocrine changes occur, with the purpose of meeting maternal-fetal demands, with the uterine cervix being a prominent element in the preservation of pregnancy."

Pregnancy is a unique and personal experience for every woman. As the baby grows inside the womb, the woman experiences hormonal changes that can affect her mood, energy, and emotional well-being. In addition, she may feel a special and deep connection with the developing baby, developing a maternal bond even before birth. Public health plays a key role in supporting and promoting health during pregnancy. It is the responsibility of governments and health systems to ensure that all women have access to quality antenatal care, regardless of their socioeconomic status or where they live (Leal *et al.*, 2020).



One of the main concerns regarding pregnancy and public health is to ensure that women have access to adequate prenatal care from the beginning of pregnancy.

"Prenatal care is a set of actions that are simultaneously preventive, health-promoting, diagnostic and curative, aiming at the good outcome of pregnancy for the woman and her child(ren)" (Leal *et al.*, 2020, p. 02). Prenatal care involves a series of examinations and medical consultations that aim to monitor the health of the mother and baby, identify and treat possible complications, as well as provide information and guidance on healthy eating, physical activity, body care and preparation for childbirth (Leal *et al.*, 2020).

The adequacy of prenatal care is associated with protective factors against the risk of fetal death and has a direct impact on reducing the incidence of preterm birth and low birth weight. In addition to avoiding complications and benefiting the maternal prognosis. Although the infant mortality rate in 2015 reached the goal of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal, the level is high, and there are still differences in mortality rates in Brazil by region, color and schooling, proving that to this day there are inequalities in the country (Oliveira; Cavalcante Filho, 2021).

3.2 PREMATURITY IN BRAZIL: RISK FACTORS AND REGIONAL CHALLENGES AND INEQUALITIES IN PRENATAL CARE

The United Nations is also concerned with the issue of prematurity, since it is one of the goals stipulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), more precisely in goal 3.2 that aims to ensure equitable access to quality antenatal care is essential. This includes regular checkups during pregnancy, screening and management of risk factors such as gestational diabetes and hypertension, and proper follow-up of pregnant women. Thus, it is important to ensure access to specialized neonatology services for premature babies, where they can receive specialized and multidisciplinary care (Gonzaga *et al.*, 2016).

Moreover, this objective encourages exclusive breastfeeding, to ensure adequate nutrition and to promote the mental health of pregnant women and their families are important measures in reducing prematurity. Awareness actions about smoking, alcohol and drug consumption also play a crucial role. The sharing of knowledge, best practices and resources can help promote the exchange of information and experiences, contributing to the improvement of care and the reduction of prematurity worldwide (Oliveira, 2023).

According to Fernandes *et al.* (2023, p. 2357), "Brazil showed a decrease in mortality in children under 1 year of age between 2005 and 2019, with a reduction from 51,467 to 35,293 deaths, respectively." The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) presented in 2021 a report that stated that the Southeast region is at the top of the regions with the highest number of deaths,



adding up to a total of 214,600 deaths between 2005 and 2020, followed by the Northeast region with 202,722 deaths and the North region with 79,193 deaths in the same period.

The Ministry of Health, through the National Prenatal and Puerperium Program (PNPP), created in 2006, establishes principles, guidelines and protocols for prenatal care in Brazil. The program encourages the performance of appropriate consultations and examinations, in addition to promoting health education and the active participation of pregnant women in the care of their health and that of the baby. In this sense, the program aims that "obstetric and neonatal care should have as essential characteristics quality and humanization. It is the duty of health services and professionals to welcome women and newborns with dignity, focusing on them as subjects of rights" (Brasil, 2004, p. 09).

One of the main goals of prenatal care is to identify and treat early risk conditions, such as hypertension, gestational diabetes, infections, anemia, among others. During prenatal consultations, clinical, laboratory and imaging tests are performed to monitor the health of the pregnant woman and the fetus. Guidance is also offered on healthy eating, adequate physical activity, correct use of medications and harmful substances, as well as information on the care of the newborn. According to Mendes *et al.* (2020, p. 795), prenatal care includes, "measures that aim to lead to deliveries of healthy newborns, without negative impacts on women's health, with an approach including psychosocial aspects and educational and preventive activities applicable in this process."

In Brazil, prenatal care is offered by both free and private services. In the Unified Health System (SUS), prenatal care is made available free of charge and universally, with the objective of guaranteeing access to all pregnant women, regardless of their socioeconomic status. The preservation and improvement of maternal and child health are some of the objectives defined by the Ministry of Health, and the SUS is responsible for providing prenatal and puerperal care (Tomasi *et al.* 2017). In addition, the Family Health Strategy (FHS) program plays an important role in this care, providing a closer and more integral follow-up, with family health teams working in the communities.

Despite the advances achieved, there are still challenges to be overcome in prenatal care in Brazil. One of them is the guarantee of quality and equity in care, especially in more remote regions and with lower socioeconomic development. To ensure quality and equity of care in these regions, it is necessary to adopt specific strategies and policies that consider their particular needs and challenges. It is essential to invest in the improvement of health infrastructure, ensuring the presence of adequate facilities, modern equipment and resources necessary for quality care. This includes the construction and maintenance of hospitals, clinics and health posts, as well as the availability of efficient transport and communication (Carvalho; Mendes; Amaral, 2019).

It is necessary to ensure the presence of trained health professionals in these regions. This can be achieved through incentive policies such as scholarships, training programs and attracting



professionals to work in these areas. In addition, it is important to promote the education and training of local health professionals in order to strengthen the capacity of the community itself to provide basic health care. It is critical to ensure access to essential medicines and medical technologies in remote regions. This can be done through partnerships with international organizations, pharmaceutical assistance programs, and facilitation of the importation and distribution of medicines. Thus, the use of information and communication technologies, such as telemedicine, can help overcome geographical barriers and provide specialized care at a distance (Tomasi *et al.*, 2017).

Promoting health awareness and education is essential to empowering local communities to take care of their own health. This can be done through awareness campaigns, educational lectures, and disease prevention programs. It is also important to adapt health information to the local culture and languages spoken in the region, to ensure that it is understood and assimilated correctly. Establishing monitoring and evaluation systems is crucial to ensuring quality and equity in care. This involves the collection and analysis of data on the region's health indicators, the performance of health services and user satisfaction. Based on this information, gaps can be identified and corrective measures implemented to improve the quality of care (Nascimento *et al.*, 2020).

It is also important to expand access to prenatal care for vulnerable groups, such as adolescents, women in situations of social vulnerability and those living in rural areas (Mario *et al.*, 2019). Another challenge is the need to strengthen the education and qualification of health professionals involved in prenatal care. It is essential that these professionals are up to date on the best practices and national and international guidelines, ensuring quality care based on scientific evidence (Leal *et al.*, 2020).

Lack of access to quality antenatal care can have serious consequences for the health of both mother and baby. Women who do not receive adequate prenatal care have a higher risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, such as preeclampsia, preterm birth, and low birth weight. In addition, lack of medical follow-up can result in undetected health problems in the fetus, which can be treated or monitored in advance. In Brazil, the primary health care network plays an important role as the first access door to the care system for pregnant women, being fundamental for the integral care of the mother-child group, which contributes to achieving more positive results in the birth process (Silva *et al.*, 2019).

Another aspect of paramount importance of public health related to pregnancy is the promotion of maternal health. Mental health should also be addressed, as pregnancy can be a period of emotional vulnerability for many women (Martinelli *et al.*, 2021). One of the greatest public health challenges regarding maternal infants is prematurity. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a premature baby as one who is born before completing 37 weeks of gestation. According to gestational age (GA) the newborn can be classified into extreme prematurity (from 22 to less than 28 weeks), severe



prematurity (from 28 to less than 32 weeks) and moderate to late prematurity (from 32 to less than 37 weeks) (Martinelli *et al.*, 2021).

According to Gonzaga *et al.* (2016) Prematurity is one of the leading causes of infant mortality worldwide. It is estimated that about 15 million babies are born prematurely each year, which corresponds to approximately 1 in 10 births. The rate of prematurity varies from country to country, being more prevalent in low- and middle-income countries. Annually, 3.6 million deaths worldwide occur in the neonatal period. Complications of preterm birth are considered direct causes for approximately 29% of these deaths.

The occurrence of prematurity is influenced by a number of factors that can vary from woman to woman. While not all cases have an identifiable cause, there are some known factors that can increase the risk of a premature birth. Because of this, prematurity is a matter of extreme importance on a global scale, representing a priority for Public Health, since it represents the main cause of neonatal deaths and the second leading cause of mortality in children under 5 years of age (Guimarães *et al.*, 2017).

There are several reasons why babies can be born prematurely. Some of the risk factors include advanced or very young maternal age, multiple pregnancies, medical complications during pregnancy such as high blood pressure and diabetes, infections during pregnancy, smoking, alcohol and illicit drug consumption, and limited access to adequate prenatal care (Silveira *et al.*, 2008).

Some health conditions of the mother can lead to premature birth. For example, problems in the cervix, which is the lower part of the uterus that opens during labor to allow the passage of the baby. Some women have a weaker or shorter cervix, which can lead to premature opening before term (Guimarães *et al.*, 2017). This is known as cervical insufficiency and can result in premature birth. Also certain malformations or abnormalities of the uterus can increase the risk of premature birth. For example, the split uterus (didelphic uterus) or the uterus with septum can hinder the proper growth of the baby and lead to premature birth (Araújo *et al.*, 2021)

Very young women (under 18) and older women (over 35) are more likely to have premature births. Adolescence and advanced maternal age are associated with a higher risk of complications during pregnancy that can lead to prematurity (Maia *et al.*, 2022). Adolescent girls' bodies are still developing, and early pregnancy can place an additional burden on the reproductive system, which may not be fully prepared to sustain a full pregnancy. As women age, ovarian reserve decreases and the quality of eggs can be affected. This can lead to a higher incidence of complications during pregnancy, including preterm birth (Mendes; Alcantara, 2023).

Women pregnant with twins, triplets or multiples are more likely to have premature births. This is because multiple gestation puts additional pressure on the mother's uterus and body, which can result



in a premature birth. "It is estimated that 1 to 3% of all births are twins, resulting in 10% of all deaths from premature causes" (Evaristo *et al.*, 2020, p. 278).

It is important that women with these conditions receive adequate prenatal care to minimize the risks. Women who have had previous preterm births are more likely to have a new preterm birth in subsequent pregnancies. It is essential that these women are closely monitored by health professionals during pregnancy and receive specialized care (Guimaraes *et al.*, 2017).

Infectious causes are another factor that contribute to the risk of prematurity, including uterine infections, urinary tract infections, and sexually transmitted infections. Thus, it is important to identify and treat these infections during pregnancy, in order to minimize the risks. Specifically, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), which, among infectious causes, is associated with increased prevalence of undesirable obstetric outcomes when not properly treated (Araújo *et al.*, 2021).

Bacterial infections of the genital tract, such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, and trichomoniasis, have been linked to a higher risk of preterm birth. These infections can ascend from the cervix to the uterus and cause inflammation, which can trigger labor ahead of time (Araújo *et al.*, 2021). Also urinary tract infections, such as cystitis or pyelonephritis, are also related to increased risk of preterm birth. When not treated properly, these infections can spread to the uterus and trigger an inflammatory response, leading to preterm labor (Marques *et al.*, 2023).

The consequences of premature births can be severe for both the baby and the mother. Premature newborns are more prone to respiratory complications, heart problems, feeding difficulties, delayed neuropsychomotor development, and have a higher risk of developing chronic diseases throughout life. Mothers may suffer from postpartum complications, such as hemorrhages and infections, and face emotional challenges related to the baby's prematurity (Viellas *et al.*, 2014).

It is critical that pregnant women receive adequate prenatal care, including regular checkups for early detection of infections, such as syphilis, and preventive measures to reduce the risk of prematurity. Timely treatment of syphilis during pregnancy with appropriate antibiotics can prevent congenital syphilis and its complications. In addition, awareness of these risk factors, both among health professionals and in communities, is essential to prevent and combat prematurity and congenital syphilis (Evaristo *et al.*, 2020).

Stress, lack of social support, during pregnancy can increase the risk of premature birth. It is critical that women receive emotional support, adopt healthy habits, and avoid harmful substances during pregnancy. A short interval between pregnancies (less than 18 months) increases the risk of prematurity. It is recommended that women wait at least 18 months between delivery and the next conception to allow full recovery of the body (Dias *et al.*, 2022).

It is important to emphasize the need for health education for pregnant women and their families, with information on the importance of adequate prenatal care, the recognition of signs of



preterm labor and the adoption of healthy habits during pregnancy. Although Brazil has advanced in the implementation of public policies aimed at prematurity, there are still challenges to be overcome, such as reducing regional inequalities in access to health services and improving the quality of prenatal care throughout the country (Silva *et al.*, 2021).

Through health education, pregnant women can acquire knowledge about the importance of regular prenatal care, adequate monitoring of maternal health, identification of warning signs, and seeking medical assistance when necessary. This contributes to the early detection of complications and the proper management of pre-existing medical conditions, ensuring the health and well-being of the mother. Pregnant women can receive guidance on a balanced diet, with foods rich in essential nutrients, as well as information on the importance of the consumption of prenatal vitamins and the restriction of harmful substances, such as alcohol and tobacco (Costa *et al.*, 2023).

3.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES FOR THE PREVENTION OF PREMATUREITY

Health education helps pregnant women and their families understand the labor process, breathing techniques, comfortable positions, and pain relief techniques. In addition, information is provided on postpartum care, breastfeeding, newborn hygiene, and warning signs that require medical attention. It is in this process that they understand the importance of newborn health care, including proper vaccination, exclusive breastfeeding, proper hygiene, and the prevention of accidental injury. This information empowers families to provide a safe and healthy environment for the baby (Jacauna *et al.*, 2023).

Launched in 2011, the Stork Network is a strategy that seeks to ensure access for all women to adequate prenatal care, safe delivery and comprehensive newborn health care. The initiative aims to reduce maternal and infant mortality as well as prematurity (Martinelli *et al.*, 2021). The Ministry of Health has promoted the humanization of labor and birth, encouraging practices that respect women's rights and provide a welcoming and safe environment during the process of giving birth. This approach seeks to reduce stress and unnecessary interventions, which may contribute to prematurity (citation).

The Stork Network is based on essential principles, such as the right to reproductive planning, humanized and qualified care, the guarantee of obstetric and neonatal safety, the integrality of care and social participation. These principles guide the organization of health services and the care provided to pregnant women and their babies. The initiative seeks to involve and empower pregnant women, their families and the community in general, encouraging active participation in the definition of health policies and the improvement of the services provided. By strengthening health care from pregnancy to postpartum, the initiative contributes to reducing maternal and infant mortality, ensuring a healthier future for the country's women and children (Santana; Passion; Santos, 2023)



In Brazil, the Unified Health System (SUS) plays a fundamental role in health promotion and prevention of prematurity. However, the Brazilian government's commitment to invest in maternal and child health and in policies to prevent prematurity is essential to ensure the well-being of mothers and babies and reduce prematurity rates in the country (Leal *et al.*, 2020).

One of the public policies aimed at prematurity is the Humanized Care to the Newborn, known as the Kangaroo Method, according to Brasil (2017, p. 13) the "humanization of neonatal care, understood as respect for the integrality and uniqueness of each newborn, not dissociated from the technical-scientific quality and good practices of the field of neonatal intensive care".

These practices have been shown to be effective in improving health outcomes and stimulating the adequate growth of preterm infants. Humanized Newborn Care recognizes the importance of considering the individuality of each baby and offering personalized, family-centered care. This policy highlights the need for a holistic approach that goes beyond clinical treatment and takes into account emotional, affective and social aspects. Through this approach, we seek to provide a welcoming and safe environment for the baby and his family, ensuring them the necessary support during this delicate phase (Mori *et al.*, 2017).

Integrating newborn care in the child's public policy agenda can contribute to the reconfiguration of the political and technical performance of childcare in the country, including greater interaction between technical areas and other areas of the Ministry of Health, especially those focused on programs and hospital management. In this context, the presence in the area of neonatologists with academic training and significant national recognition is one of the elements that characterizes and at the same time strengthens the insertion of neonatal care in the priority axis of federal public policies (Brasil, 2017).

Another important achievement in policies for prematurity was the National Policy of Integral Attention to Children's Health (PNAISC), resulting from Ordinance No. 1,130, of August 5, 2015, of the Ministry of Health. It is a set of guidelines and actions of the Brazilian Ministry of Health aimed at the promotion, prevention and health care of children. This policy aims to ensure the full physical, mental and social development of children, ensuring them the right to health and a healthy life (Brasil, 2015).

PNAISC was created based on the understanding that childhood is a crucial phase for human development and that investing in children's health is fundamental to the future of society. It seeks to ensure equitable and comprehensive access to quality health services, from primary care to medium and high complexity. As guidelines, it provides for the encouragement of exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months of age and the continuity of breastfeeding until 2 years or more, as a form of protection and promotion of child health and appreciation of Primary Care as a gateway to the health system, with the



offer of promotion actions, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation, in addition to monitoring child growth and development (Brasil, 2015).

Established through Ordinance GM/MS No. 715, of 2022, the Maternal and Child Care Network (Rami), is a set of integrated services and actions that have as their main objective to promote the health and well-being of pregnant women, parturients, puerperal women, children and their families. In the scope of primary care, Rami works through the Family Health Strategy (FHS) teams and the basic health units (BRASIL, 2022). At this level, prenatal consultations, monitoring of the child's development, immunizations, guidance on breastfeeding, family planning, among other essential care, are performed. In addition, Rami teams also promote health education actions, such as lectures and support groups (Santana; Passion; Santos, 2023).

To address this public health problem, effective measures are implemented. First, it is necessary to invest in promoting universal access to prenatal care, ensuring that all pregnant women receive adequate follow-up from the beginning of pregnancy. Thus, it is essential to strengthen health education, informing the population about the risks of prematurity and the importance of adopting healthy habits during pregnancy.

It is necessary to invest in the training of health professionals, so that they are prepared to deal with cases of prematurity and offer the necessary support to both mother and baby. In addition, it is important to improve the structure of hospitals, ensuring that they are equipped with the appropriate technology and resources to deal with premature births. In addition to actions in the field of health, it is essential that the government promotes public policies aimed at reducing prematurity. This includes family planning measures, actions to combat smoking and alcohol and drug consumption during pregnancy, as well as programs to encourage breastfeeding and adequate care for the newborn (Nascimento *et al.*, 2020).

Health professionals should be able to identify risk factors associated with prematurity, such as a history of previous preterm birth, infections, multiple pregnancy, smoking, among others. The training allows them to gain a good understanding of risk factors and know how to evaluate and monitor pregnant women in relation to these factors. Adequate training includes strategies for the prevention and management of common complications in premature infants, such as respiratory problems, infections, feeding difficulties and neurological development (Carvalho; Mendes; Amaral, 2019).

Prematurity is a constantly evolving field, with new medical advances and best practices emerging regularly. Ongoing training is essential to keep healthcare professionals up to date on the latest evidence and care guidelines for premature babies. This includes access to information about innovative therapies, medicines, technologies and therapeutic approaches that can improve outcomes for these babies. This plays a crucial role in the prevention, management and promotion of the healthy



development of these babies, as well as providing adequate support to their families during this challenging phase (Fernandes *et al.*, 2023).

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prematurity is a public health issue that demands special attention from government policies. Public health policies play an indispensable role in the prevention, treatment and follow-up of cases of prematurity, aiming to ensure the best possible care for neonates and their families.

Neonatal care is essential to promote the healthy development of premature babies, enabling them to overcome initial challenges and achieve a full life. Investments in hospital infrastructure, training of health professionals and access to state-of-the-art medical technologies are fundamental to ensure the quality of care provided.

The complications associated with prematurity are often complex and can have significant impacts on the lives of preterm infants and their families. Sequelae can range from cognitive and motor challenges to long-term health problems. Therefore, it is crucial to develop preventive and interventional strategies, focusing on the early identification and adequate treatment of complications.

Therefore, it is essential that public health policies continue to strengthen perinatal care networks, promoting awareness of the risks of prematurity and the importance of adequate prenatal care. In addition, continued research and the dissemination of knowledge should be encouraged to improve the understanding of risk factors and best practices in the care of premature infants.

The collaboration of the public and private sectors, as well as the participation of communities and health institutions, is necessary to advance in reducing the rates of prematurity and improving the quality of life of premature newborns and their families.



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