



Family and community practices that promote child survival, growth and development

**A REVIEW OF
THE EVIDENCE**



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
GENEVA

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Executive summary

BACKGROUND

Every year, nearly 11 million children die before reaching their fifth birthday, and most of them during their first year of life. Most of these deaths (98% in 2002) are in developing countries; more than half are due to acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea, measles, malaria, and HIV/AIDS. In addition, malnutrition underlies 54% of all child deaths. Projections based on the 1996 analysis *The Global Burden of Disease* indicate that these conditions will continue to be major contributors to child deaths in 2020 unless significant efforts are made to control them (Murray & Lopez, 1996).

In response to this challenge, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) strategy, which focuses on these five conditions, and which includes three main components:

- Improvements in the case management skills of health workers through the provision of locally adapted guidelines on IMCI and through activities to promote their use.
- Improvements in the health system that are required for the effective management of childhood illness.
- Improvements in family and community practices.

This paper addresses **improvements in family and community practices**. More specifically, it presents the evidence for twelve key practices (see below), identified by UNICEF and WHO to be of key importance in providing good home-care for the child concerning the prevention or treatment of the IMCI conditions, in order to ensure survival, reduce morbidity, and promote healthy growth and development. It does not include the four additional practices added following a meeting of UNICEF, the WHO Regional Office for Africa and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) which took place in Durban, South Africa in June 2000, as these practices will need additional work to reach a specificity whose impact can be measured.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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