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Global causes of maternal death: a WHO systematic analysis

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Summary

Background

Data for the causes of maternal deaths are needed to inform policies to improve maternal health. We developed and analysed global, regional, and subregional estimates of the causes of maternal death during 2003–09, with a novel method, updating the previous WHO systematic review.

Methods

We searched specialised and general bibliographic databases for articles published between between Jan 1, 2003, and Dec 31, 2012, for research data, with no language restrictions, and the WHO mortality database for vital registration data. On the basis of prespecified inclusion criteria, we analysed causes of maternal death from datasets. We aggregated country level estimates to report estimates of causes of death by Millennium Development Goal regions and worldwide, for main and subcauses of death categories with a Bayesian hierarchical model.