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Congenital conditions are structural or functional anomalies that arise during intrauterine life and can be detected prenatally, at birth, or in infancy. These conditions vary in severity and may impact life expectancy. The World Health Organization reports that approximately 8% of under-5 deaths globally are caused by congenital conditions. Many children with congenital conditions are born in low- and middle-income countries.Genetic factors, such as chromosomal abnormalities (e.g., Pataus Syndrome) or single gene defects, contribute to a small proportion of these conditions. Environmental factors like maternal infections, exposure to radiation, certain pollutants, nutritional deficiencies (e.g., iodine), or maternal illnesses also increase the risk. The cause of most birth defects is unknown, with complex genetic and environmental interactions proposed but not yet fully understood.Preventing congenital conditions requires a multi-faceted approach, including public health measures such as food fortification. Ensuring adequate detection, treatment, and long-term care for affected children is also crucial. World Health Organization (WHO) initiatives aim to provide global estimates of congenital conditions, support countries with models of care, and develop guidelines for this area.The WHO has adopted a resolution urging Member States to prioritize prevention, detection, and care of congenital conditions. A range of causes leads to these anomalies, necessitating a varied portfolio of prevention approaches, including measures against sexually transmitted infections.Congenital disorders have unknown causes for many conditions, including heart defects, cleft lip or palate, and club foot. Preventive measures focus on removing risk factors or enhancing protective ones.In regions where medical treatment is readily available, specialist centres can effectively address congenital disorders. For instance, early detection and treatment of congenital hypothyroidism enable children to grow into healthy adults, while missed diagnosis or unavailability of simple treatments can lead to severe intellectual disabilities. Children with certain types of congenital disorders may require ongoing support from physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and their families and community.To combat birth defects, the World Health Assembly (2010) adopted a resolution that encourages Member States to promote primary prevention and enhance the health of children with congenital disorders by developing surveillance systems, building capacity for prevention and care, raising awareness about newborn screening programmes, supporting affected families, and strengthening research on major birth defects. WHO collaborates with partners to provide training on surveillance and prevention of congenital disorders.The organisation also develops normative tools, including guidelines and a global plan of action, to strengthen medical care and rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities. With advancements in diagnostic techniques, such as fetal echocardiography, doctors can now identify heart defects during pregnancy. The success of early detection and treatment is exemplified by athletes like Shaun White, who underwent surgery for tetralogy of Fallot as an infant.However, many adults who survive congenital heart disease face ongoing challenges, including increased risk for heart failure, pulmonary hypertension, and fatal heart rhythm abnormalities. To address these concerns, the Pediatric Heart Network is studying the health and outcomes of children with congenital heart disease over time to identify potential barriers in their transition to adulthood. With the advancement of gene testing, people with congenital heart disease can have personalised treatment plans tailored to their individual risk profiles.In regions where medical care is scarce, congenital syphilis remains a significant public health challenge. For example, in the Western Region of the Brazilian Federal District, there were 1654 cases of congenital syphilis per 100,000 live births in 2021, which is 33 times higher than the WHO target. This highlights the need for continued research and collaboration to combat vertical transmission of diseases like syphilis.Syphilis in Pregnancy: A Public Health Success Story in BrazilIn 2021, an assessment revealed that while antenatal care was high, syphilis testing and treatment coverage were far from meeting global targets. Only 68% of pregnant women attending ANC were tested for syphilis, and only 46% of those diagnosed received adequate treatment. However, through a comprehensive action plan, the Western Health Region of the Federal District successfully reduced congenital syphilis rates by 37% in just two years.The implementation of the plan, which included improved governance and quality of ANC services, was driven by effective person-centred data monitoring. A digital tool was deployed to track pregnant women who initiated ANC, allowing for real-time monitoring of syphilis testing, test results, and treatment history. The tool also identified those who needed re-engagement in care and soon will track sexual partners' testing.The action plan included several critical actions, such as training health workers on easy-to-use standard operation procedures and information on the latest national clinical protocols. The region also offered free rapid testing and treatment for syphilis, HIV, and viral hepatitis B and C to everyone using health services, regardless of pregnancy status. This approach helped decrease stigma and discrimination related to STI testing.The Western Region's efforts were recognized with the Silver Seal towards the elimination of vertical transmission of syphilis by the Federal District and the Silver Medal of Good Practices by the Brazilian Ministry of Health for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. This success story demonstrates how political will, data-driven strategic management, and a committed health workforce can make tangible improvements to people's lives.The World Health Organization (WHO) and the global community are committed to the triple elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis B. Brazil's experience serves as an example and inspiration for other countries facing similar challenges. By adopting data-driven approaches and working together, it is possible to make significant progress in reducing the impact of these diseases.

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