INTRODUCTION

Tetanus is a dramatic medical problem, which has been recognized since the time of Hippocrates (Martin, 1980).

Tetanus neonatorum is a fatal disease and remains a major leading cause of neonatal deaths in many parts of the world particularly in the most developing countries. Almost 2/3 of the 14 million child deaths each year are accounted for by just four specific causes, diarrhoea, respiratory infections, measles and neonatal tetanus. The great majorityry of these deaths could now be prevented at very low cost (UNICEF 1990).

It is a distressing neuromuscular disorder resulting from elaboration of highly potent exotoxin affecting mainly the central nervous tissue caused by Clostridium tetani which is an anaerobic spore forming bacillus . Inspite of the availability of safe and effective immunization, tetanus is still a serious wide spread health problem and in many developing countries it is the major cause of death in the neoborn infants (Stoll, 1979).

The prevalence of neonatal tetanus in many tropical and underdeveloped countries may be attributed to social, environmental, economic and cultural factors which are responsible for its occurrence (Islam et al., 1982).

Accurate assessment of tetanus neonatorum incidence is difficult, because death in early infancy in traditional societies tends to be unrecorded. The results of multiple

community surveys yielded that neonatal tetanus mortality rate ranged from less than 5 to more than 60 per 1000 live births, these deaths represent 23% and 72% of all neonatal deaths (Stainfield and Galazka, 1984).

The disease is more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas and it is high among males compared to females (Rosenan, 1973).

In developing countries, neonatal tetanus is a common and a highly fatal disease due to cutting the umbilical cord under septic conditions (Mandell et al., 1980).

As tetanus neonatorum is one of the leading causes of infant death throughout the world, hence the importance of its prevention (W.H.O., 1978).

This study aims to determine the suspected factors and their relation to the morbidity and mortality of tetanus neonatorum.