Medical Xpress

# DomRep probes 16 baby deaths at public hospital

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(AP) -- Health officials are investigating the recent deaths of 16 newborns in the capital's largest maternity hospital, hinting that unhygienic conditions are to blame.

A panel probing the deaths found that certain hospital areas were "very contaminated," Senen Caba, president of the Dominican Medical Association, told The Associated Press on Wednesday. He declined to elaborate and said the investigation is ongoing.

The Health Ministry has launched its own investigation, which Minister Bautista Rojas says is still under way.

The 16 babies died within a week in late August at the public hospital Our Lady of High Grace in Santo Domingo. Officials at the hospital say there are on average 35 births a day.

Hospital director Juan Cid Troncoso said Tuesday that four of the newborns tested positive for a common bacteria, but he did not say whether it led to their deaths.

Troncoso said an internal investigation found the deaths were caused by other factors, including premature deliveries. He said most of the babies were born prematurely, at less than 30 weeks.

The country's mortality rate is 26 deaths per 1,000 live births, ranking 83rd out of 224 countries, according to the CIA World Factbook.

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