Improving the quality of maternal and newborn care through standard based audits at Limbe Health Centre in Blantyre, Malawi.

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Abstract

Statement of the problem: Despite significant gains in recent years, maternal and neonatal mortality remains a public health concern in Malawi with 96% of births attended by skilled birth attendants, but high mortality rates suggesting serious gaps in the quality of care in health facilities. Seed Global Health, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences and the Ministry of Health are working to address quality of care issues through collaborative efforts focused on training, mentorship and quality improvement projects in the Midwifery led Ward at Limbe Health Center in Blantyre, Malawi using standard based audits. Methodology: We developed a standard based audit tool using WHO's guidance in their report on *Standards for improving quality of maternal and newborn care in health facilities*. We conducted three retrospective audits in June 2023, December 2023 and July 2024. Audits focused on documentation of the parameters of four core components of the intrapartum and immediate postpartum period: labour chart used to monitor fetal and maternal condition; progress of labour; immediate and one-hour postpartum care; essential newborn care. Using systematic random sampling, we audited 713 charts from 3 months preceding the month of assessment (236 in June 2023, 240 in December 2023 and 237 in July 2024). Descriptive analysis was used. Findings: Findings from the first, second and third assessments showed adherence to standards as follows respectively: maternal and fetal condition (66%, 56% and 52%), immediate postpartum care (72%, 88% and 91%), one-hour postpartum care (48%, 48% and 54%) and essential newborn care (46%, 61% and 68%). Conclusion and significance: Standard based audits have guided our efforts at Limbe Health Centre to develop data-driven, quality improvement projects. However, to sustain the gains, there is a need for continuous capacity development of Health Care Providers and adequate resources.

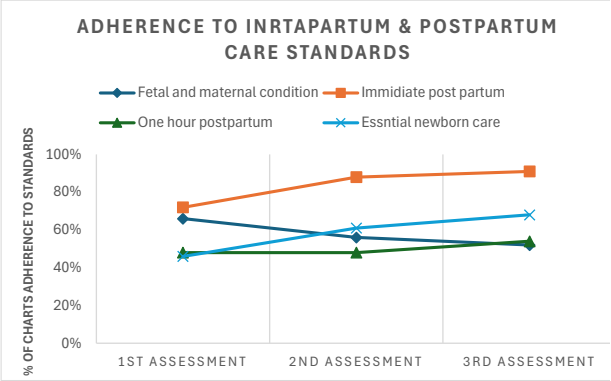


Figure 1: Labour chart adherence to intrapartum and postpartum care standards

References

1. World Health Organization. Standards for improving quality of maternal and newborn care in health facilities. WHO. 2016.
2. Malawi Demographic and Health Survey Key Indicator Report. 2024.
3. Maternal and Newborn Health Disparities in Malawi. UNICEF 2025.

Biography



Richard Malirakwenda is a highly motivated and competent public health specialist with over 10 years of experience in health systems strengthening and a strong background in public health programming, monitoring and evaluation of public health related programs and interventions, implementation research, and project management. He holds a Master of Public Health and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Midwifery. In his current role of Midwifery Technical Advisor at Seed Global Health, he is providing technical, programmatic and MEL support in the implementation of the first ever Midwifery Led Ward model in Malawi aimed at improving midwifery education and practice. He is also coordinating the implementation of quality improvement projects at the Midwifery Led Ward.

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