



NIHR Global Health Research Group on Stillbirth Prevention and Management in Sub-Saharan Africa

Special Issue COVID-19

May 2020

The NIHR Global Health Research Group on Stillbirth Prevention and Management in Sub-Saharan Africa at The University of Manchester is a three-year programme funded by the National Institute of Health Research (UK) implemented by The University of Manchester in partnership with LAMRN (www.lamrn.org), a network of six African countries (Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

The programme aims to promote knowledge sharing and capacity building in the area of stillbirth prevention and management in low resource setting. Through this work the research group will gain an understanding of the issues in improving stillbirth prevention, childbirth and bereavement care in low income settings; develop culturally relevant studies for further investigation in this unexplored area and establish itself in the Global arena as a catalyst for change.

Impact of COVID-19 on delivery of research projects by the NIHR GHR Group

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has impacted on the work of the NIHR Group, with the safety of all involved being of paramount importance. Although face-to-face contact is suspended in the UK and partner countries, the team have adapted their way of working and moved to engaging remotely. Implications for each study has been as follow:



- Communication following stillbirth (qualitative study): in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia recruitment has been suspended, however, participants already identified for the study are being interviewed by telephone.
- Dignity game study (pre and post-test): in Malawi and Zambia, the first phase of the study was delivered in March. Plans have been made for the post-game questionnaire (originally scheduled to be completed 3 months later) to be carried out when it is safe for all involved to participate.
- Feasibility study (Themabani clinic): in Zimbabwe all women were recruited prior to lockdown; the remaining face-to-face interviews have been performed over the telephone. Final data collection regarding staff experiences of the Themabani Clinic is in the process of being set up for completion through an online survey.
- Feasibility study (peer supporter and bereavement champions): in Kenya and Uganda, this study is delayed due to the impact of the pandemic. Recruitment of women to be matched with an identified peer supporter has been put on hold, as have meetings with bereavement champions recruited to promote change in practice, with ongoing monitoring for the study to be resumed.



To promote knowledge and infection prevention of the Coronavirus, the UK team has also shared materials (WHO, ICM, RCOG) with the wider team through the programme website, with partners contributing information in respect of developments in their own countries.

Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Online Capacity Development

In order to maintain capacity development for all members of the research group during lockdown, the team has engaged partners in developing a programme of training to strengthen research capacities and engagement with research assistants and leads. With oversight of the Training Lead, Dr Tracey Mills, the online Capacity Development Programme is delivered weekly and includes a mix of research and clinical content. (Table)



Date	Topic
4 th May	Writing for publications and abstract writing
11 th May	Critical appraisal of qualitative and quantitative papers
18 th May	How to conduct a meta-synthesis
26 th May	Analysis of qualitative interviews
01 st June	Safeguarding: protecting interests of participants, colleagues and third parties
8 th June	Monitoring labour including intrapartum care
15 th June	Ethics in research
22 nd June	Ethical issues in clinical trials
29 th June	How clinical trials are conducted
6 th July	Care of women with Eclampsia
13 th July	Consenting women in labour

These sessions involve practical activities to build academic skills and competencies (eg. developing an abstract for conference submission) as well as to engage with peers.

LAMRN leads are also included in training and peer development. Sessions in development include grant writing, project management and leadership, commencing on 29th May for monthly delivery.

Updates on research planning and delivery for the extension period

During the lockdown, the NIHR Group on Stillbirth has submitted ethics applications for the new studies planned as part of the grant extension. Following approval from the University of Manchester Ethics Committee, in-country ethics applications will be submitted. In this period, research papers from across the group have also been completed and submitted for publication.

Additional funding

The team has been successful with applications for two GCRF grants of £5,000 to develop education and information materials. Uganda will develop a video on communication and care of women following a stillbirth, for use in the training of healthcare providers. Kenya will use multi-disciplinary expertise to design leaflets and posters on obstetric fistula and stillbirth for awareness raising at national and community levels.



For the most recent updates please check our programme [website](#) and follow the [blog](#) and our twitter account [@LamrnStillbirth](#)