



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

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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.

Dissemination of research findings has started...

The NIHR stillbirth group has started disseminating research findings from the studies conducted across the 6 LAMRN countries.

In October 2019, LAMRN Zimbabwe attended the Zimbabwe Confederation of Midwives (ZICOM) conference, where they presented the initial results from the cross-sectional study conducted at Mpilo Hospital (Bulawayo), aimed at predicting and preventing stillbirths. LAMRN Tanzania attended the Catholic University of Health and Allied Science Scientific Conference in Mwanza in November, where Flora Kuzenza disseminated research findings of the mix-method study on intrapartum transfers and stillbirth.



LAMRN Zimbabwe at the ZICOM



The NIHR Global Health Research Group on Stillbirth was also present at the International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA) annual conference in Madrid, Spain in October. As invited keynote speaker, Elizabeth Ayebare (Uganda) inspired the audience with a presentation about the need for supportive and bereavement care in high-burden settings to help families grieve after experiencing a perinatal loss. Other important contributions included findings from the Zimbabwe cross-sectional study by Dr Rebecca Smyth (UK) and a top scoring abstract by Dr Tracey Mills (UK) sharing findings on the cultural influences on stillbirth in Kenya and Uganda. Two of our posters were also highly commended.

POSTER 1: A grounded-theory study on the impact of disrespectful maternal and newborn care on stillbirth experiences, in **Zambia** and **Tanzania**

T Lavender, R Laisser, C Tembo, C Bedwell



POSTER 2: Parents' and health workers' experience of care and support after stillbirth in **Kenya** and **Uganda**

T Mills, R Mukwana, A Nendela, G Omoni, J Mweteise, A Nabisere, E Ayebare, S Wakasiaka, T Lavender

For the most recent updates please check our programme website (<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/stillbirth-prevention-africa/>) and follow the blog (<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/stillbirth-prevention-africa/blog/>)

COUNTRY UPDATES

Kenya: Developmental Milestones at the Reproductive Health Unit (KNH)

The occurrence of a stillbirth brings untold sadness to both parents and care providers in any setting. Health professionals face challenges in caring for parents experiencing stillbirth in the world and especially in Africa where infrastructure is often a limiting factor.

Experiences from preliminary work at Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi indicates that parents desire private and better communication when a stillbirth occurs. Although the current stillbirth study is still in its infancy, LAMRN Kenya has sensitised the administration and staff about the burden and the care needs of parents experiencing stillbirths at this facility. In response, the hospital is taking key steps in making the



Left: RA Raheli Mukwana sensitizing

environment more conducive for these families.

For instance, a private room has been allocated for parents experiencing the loss and a dedicated counsellor has been appointed to provide care and support during the grieving process. We look forward to a brighter 2020 when we anticipate enactment of policies and protocols for care and support for these families.



RA Anne Nendela engaging with the senior management in the RH unit

Tanzania: Completion of qualitative interviews

Following ethics approval for the study on communication following stillbirth, research assistants (RAs) Debora Kimaro, Flora Kuzenza and Happiness Shayo conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with women, partners and family members to explore how they were informed about their stillbirth at the health facility where it occurred. They also asked them about how communication should be improved in this regard. Complementary information from healthcare providers and religious leaders who were also interviewed, is adding important findings for the development of a new training package in this area.



RAs attending the workshop for the study testing the new Labour Care Guide

The NIHR Stillbirth programme has also provided the RAs with the opportunity for training on REDCap (<https://www.project-redcap.org/>), the electronic research data capture software, used for data collection. This has been key in supporting their involvement with a study testing the new WHO Labour Care guide for intrapartum care.

Zimbabwe: Launch of the Thembani clinic

LAMRN Zimbabwe has opened the doors to the first clients to the newly established



Thembani clinic (“with hope”): a specialised antenatal clinical service for women with subsequent pregnancies following stillbirth aiming at improving birth outcomes. The clinic is part of a feasibility study adhering to the WHO ANC guidelines on antenatal care for a positive pregnancy experience. The clinic offers psycho-social support and preparation for birth, in addition to specialised antenatal care.

Since November 2019 there has been a positive uptake as evidenced by more than 30 women having attended the clinic.

LAMRN Zimbabwe appreciates the dedicated team of midwives and obstetricians at Mpilo Hospital for their tireless work and commitment in providing this invaluable service.



From left: Sikhululekile Mremi, Rebecca Smyth, Solwayo Ngwenya, Tina Lavender, Kushupika Dube and Grace Danda.

Zambia: Recruiting participants for new studies

LAMRN Zambia has started a study on Communication following stillbirth. Working

with the Community Engagement and Involvement group, the RAs Kutemba Lyangenda and Khuzuet Tuwele have begun qualitative interviews with bereaved parents about their acceptance and attitudes to post-mortems following stillbirth. Interviews with key stakeholders has also included a local chief, renowned in the Region for promoting maternal wellbeing.



The CEI group in Mansa, Zambia



From left: Kutemba Lyangenda, Khuzuet Tuwele, Valentina Actis Danna, Chief, Mrs Chowa Kasengele, Dr Sabina Wakasiaka, Master of ceremony, Visitor

The RAs have also received training by Dr Sabina Wakasiaka (Africa Regional Coordinator) and Valentina Actis Danna (Research Associate) on the new LAMRN board game “Dignity”; promoting Respectful Maternity and Newborn care. The aim of this study is to determine whether the implementation of “Dignity” improves midwives’ knowledge and understanding of respectful maternity care practices. The study has received ethics approval and will start in early 2020.

Malawi: Completion of clinical audit and starting new research

LAMRN Malawi has completed the re-audit of stillbirths at both Bwaila Maternity Hospital (Lilongwe) and Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (Blantyre). Re-audit results indicate a general improvement of record-keeping as well as better monitoring of blood pressure and proteinuria during labour. On-the-job training and constant monitoring by research assistants (RAs) Chisomo Petross and Isabella Chisuse have encouraged health professionals to sustain these achievements beyond the audit period.

The RAs have attended training on qualitative interviews to prepare them for the study on Communication following stillbirth. Training was also provided by Valentina Actis Danna on the board game “Dignity”. Both studies have now received ethics approval, and data collection has started.



Left: Valentina Actis Danna demonstrates how to play the RMNC game “Dignity”
Right: Chisomo Petross in-training to conduct a qualitative in-depth interview

Uganda: Initiation of data collection for a feasibility study

LAMRN Uganda has obtained ethical and administrative clearance to conduct a ‘feasibility’ study of a bereavement care package aimed at advancing care and support after stillbirth. The baseline data collection will record stillbirth and neonatal deaths as well as post-natal care services offered to women having a poor pregnancy outcome. The team has also identified health professionals with a previous experience of stillbirth to be trained as bereavement champions.

The Ugandan team have also disseminated their research findings on supportive and respectful care after stillbirth by attending the Conference of the Association of Obstetrician and Gynaecologists of Uganda.



Jonan and Allen selecting records of mothers with stillbirth for electronic data capture



To read Allen Nabisere’s blog about her experience of conducting research in rural settings in Uganda, go to:

<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/stillbirth-prevention-africa/2019/12/09/qualitative-research-in-rural-settings-what-does-it-take/>

LAMRN Uganda with the certificates of the AOGU Conference 2019