Effects of Using Continuous Quality Improvement as a Tool for Inspiration on Rates of HIV and Malnutrition Amongst HIV-Exposed Infants in Rural Rwanda

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BACKGROUND
Frontline health care workers are most effective when they feel valued\(^i\), capable\(^{ii, iii}\), and optimistic about the future\(^iv\). The Ihangane Project and Ruli District Hospital, serving 200,000 people in the Northern Province of Rwanda, created a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program that promotes these principles amongst health care workers and HIV+ mothers as a key strategy to do the following:

- Increase adoption of Prevention Of Mother To Child Transmission (PMTCT) protocols,
- Eliminate mother to child HIV transmission, and
- Dramatically decrease malnutrition amongst HIV-exposed infants.

OVERVIEW

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1 Hospital</th>
<th>7 Health Centers</th>
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<td>100s of mothers and health care workers.</td>
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Pillars are assessed using an Observational Check List (OCL) every four months, followed by a collaborative meeting to review results. Health care workers identify areas of strength and weakness in current practices and consider interventions for improvement. In collaboration with HIV+ mothers, they design and implement improvements in their system of care.

CQI PROCESS

- Conduct baseline Observational Check List (OCL) at health centers.
- Repeat external OCL and present their results at the next Nutrition for HIV Exposed Infants (NHI) meeting.
- Health care workers choose projects to improve challenge areas.
- Return to health centers, engage mothers in improvement project.
- Present data to health care workers to celebrate strengths and identify challenges.

CONCLUSION

Good health outcomes are possible even in extremely resource-limited settings. A Continuous Quality Improvement program that enables health care workers and their patients to improve their systems of care and connects actions to good health outcomes is a cost effective approach to building effective and resilient health systems that can reach and sustain health goals.