

2014 Maternal Health Update

Our goal is reducing these preventable deaths to a very low minimum number.

We are trying very hard to improve maternal and neonatal health. Despite our best efforts we still had some difficult outcomes this past year. I felt compelled to share a few of these patient stories to provide a realistic perspective.

Dan and Joan Jones Medical Missionaries in Zambia



January 2015

2014: A new record of 1,189 deliveries were recorded this year. This figure is an increase of 279 more deliveries compared to 2013. It is the first time in the history of ZMH that 1,000 babies were born in a calendar year. There were 29 sets of twins and 1 group of triplets this year.

The Dressing Station – Jonathan Kaplan: “All doctors have their ghosts. Sometimes they jostle me: the one I couldn’t save, the ones I killed. For all of us – even the most dedicated and skilled – the dead pile up, the results of decisions swayed by fatigue or hubris or blind bad luck.”

The Dressing Station—Jonathan Kaplan: “And there are those who are simply casualties of the system. All we can do is the best that we can. Each victory is only a temporary respite. Every loss diminishes us. Yet, we always continue in the hope of redemption.”

Ired Kamalenda is from a village called Lonkwe which is 1 hour away from ZMH by vehicle. She is 37 years old. It was her 9th pregnancy. Her pregnancy was 37 weeks. On June 24, 2014, she presented to the maternity ward in advanced labor. She was already fully dilated. The membranes had not ruptured yet. An ultrasound revealed a breech presentation. I made the decision to attempt a vaginal delivery rather than do a cesarean section because of her high number of pregnancies. After artificially rupturing the membranes, a cord prolapse was diagnosed. The fetal heart dropped ver low to 70 beats per minute. No preparations had been made in advance to do a cesarean section. It normally takes at least 30 minutes for our O.R. staff to prepare for a cesarean section. Due to her strong contractions, she patient began to push to proceed with a vaginal breech delivery. She delivered at 1:45 PM. The baby weighed 7 and 1/2 pounds. The APGAR score was 0/10. The resuscitation efforts were futile. The baby was stillborn.

Orient Siachalwa is from a village called Mapatizya which is 4 hours away from ZMH by vehicle. She is 29 years old. It was her fourth pregnancy however she had only 1 living child. All 3 of her previous deliveries were cesarean sections. 2 of these pregnancies had resulted in stillbirths. She was referred from the rural health center because of vaginal bleeding. She was admitted to



Orient Siachalwa with her newborn baby girl.

the new antenatal ward on January 1, 2014. An ultrasound exam confirmed the diagnosis of placenta previa as the cause of the bleeding. When her pregnancy reached 37 weeks, she went for an elective cesarean section on January 15. A baby girl was delivered at 11:55 AM. The weight was 6 and 1/2 pounds. The APGAR score was 9 out of 10. When the surgery was finished, she developed post partum hemorrhage before we could leave the O.R. She was bleeding profusely from the vagina due to poor tone of the uterus. She became hypotensive due to the acute blood loss. We transfused her 5 units of blood in the O.R. to try to stabilize her. There was no surgeon immediately available to perform a hysterectomy. So, the risk was taken to transfer the patient to Livingstone General Hospital which is 45 minutes away. She miraculously survived the transfer and the hysterectomy was performed to control her bleeding. She was discharged from the hospital in Livingstone 2 weeks later.

Precious Ndaila is from a village called Simawatachela which is 2 hours from ZMH by vehicle. She was 31 years old. It was her 6th pregnancy. She was referred from the rural health center for an ultrasound scan. Her pregnancy was at 38 weeks when she was admitted to the antenatal ward on June 15, 2014. After waiting for 3 weeks, she had not gone into labor yet. When she was past being 1 week overdue, an attempt was made to induce her labor. The induction failed on 2 consecutive days with cervical ripening tablet. On the third day, she had 2 non stress tests to check the fetal heart rate. Both exams revealed a problem with the baby’s heart beat. That day was very busy because we had 3 other emergency cesarean sections consecutively. Due to this hectic day, I was never presented with these 2 non-reassuring strips. She should have had a cesarean section that day. On the fourth day which was July 5, 2014, the fetal heart tones were no longer detected. The diagnosis of intrauterine fetal death was made. An oxytocin IV fluid drip was placed to started to augment the contractions. After several hours, the cervix had failed to dilate any further. The decision was made to proceed with a cesarean section. A stillborn baby was delivered at 5:45 PM. The baby weighed 8 pounds. After the operation was finished, she developed post partum hemorrhage in the operating room. She was bleeding profusely from the vagina. We started a blood transfusion but her blood pressure continued to drop as the bleeding persisted despite all of our efforts to control it. We did not even have time to re-open the abdomen to attempt an emergency hysterectomy procedure. The patient went into cardiac arrest. We attempted CPR for over 30 minutes but she did not respond and was pronounced dead.

Phenet Siateya is from a village called Mapatizya which is 4 hours away from ZMH by vehicle. She is 18 years old. It was her first pregnancy. She was referred from the rural health center to deliver at ZMH because of a mental impairment. She started staying at the mother shelter to await delivery on September 28, 2013. This time was before the construction of the new antenatal ward was finished. When her pregnancy reached 40 weeks, she went into labor at 2:00 PM. The labor was prolonged. She pushed for 1 and 30 minutes. She delivered just after midnight on October 7, 2013. The baby weighed 6 pounds. The APGAR score was only 2 out of 10. The midwife on duty called me to help resuscitate the baby. I tried for over 30 minutes to help the baby breathe but my efforts failed. The baby died 2 hours later due to birth asphyxia.



Phenet Siateya (L) with her mother (R).