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| **Appreciative Inquiry: A positive way to improve prevents stillbirths and early neonatal death?** |
| **Merriel, Abi**1; **Dembo, Zione** 2; **Mchenga, Allan**3; **Lough, Mark**4; **Makwenda, Charles**2; **Larkin, Michael**1; **Hussein, Julia**5; **Malata, Address**6; **Coomarasamy, Arri**1 *1 - University of Birmingham. 2 - Parent and Child Health Initiative. 3 - Parent and Child Health Initiaitve. 4 - Mark Lough Consulting. 5 - University of Aberdeen. 6 - Malawi University of Science and Technology.* |
| **Introduction** Improving the quality of maternity care in Malawi is one important way to address the burden of preventable stillbirth and early neonatal death faced by Malawian women and their babies. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) has the potential to support staff in making improvements to the care they provide. It is a positive-focussed, motivational organisational change method to bring about improvements in clinical care and working lives of healthcare providers. It harnesses the energy and ideas of staff, through a four-stage cycle: Discover (how it is now), Dream (of what it could be), Design (concrete plans) and Destiny (implement plans).  The objective of this study is to assess the feasibility of implementing Appreciative Inquiry in district level facilities in Malawi.  **Material and Methods** AI is being adapted and implemented in three district level health facilities in Malawi using a participatory approach. The teams attend monthly meetings and create action plans to carry out between meetings.  **Results** We have successfully modified the AI approach to implement the action cycle in short 1-2 hour sessions with the entire ward team, including the patient attendants, nurses, clinical officers and clerks. All team members actively participate in sessions. Each team chose a different focus for their activities, including ‘team spirit’, ‘infection prevention for staff personal health’ and ‘infection prevention for good patient outcomes’. In all three hospitals there has been some steps towards change, driven largely by key team members. In one hospital the staff have lobbied the management to have guards to support their ‘traffic control’ policies on the wards in addition to successfully implementing the removal of shoes before entering the nursery and kangaroo ward. Another team has had success in reducing the number of incidences of overfilled sharps bins and waste in the incorrect bins. The third team has increased the frequency they monitor patients to at least twice per day. The main challenges faced are from the constantly changing teams and the lack of time and resources to dedicate to the change process.  **Conclusions** It is feasible to implement AI in maternity settings in Malawi, however the presence of committed AI champions seems to be important. The challenges faced within the health system necessitate realistic goal setting. When teams concentrate on things they can achieve and stay positive, changes can happen.AI has the potential to allow staff to build upon their strengths to do the simple tasks well and reduce preventable stillbirths and early neonatal deaths. |
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| **CONTACT** | |
| Name: | **Abi** |
| Lastname: | **Merriel** |
| E-mail: | **a.merriel@bham.ac.uk** |
| Country: | **UK - United Kingdom** |
| Institution | **University of Birmingham** |
| Cellphone: | **+447740334922** |
| City: | **Birmingham** |