The Surgical Safety Checklist (SSC), developed by WHO, is a tool to improve safety and encourage teamwork and communication in the operating room (OR) that leads to a reduction in surgical complications.1,2,3,4,5 We hypothesized that its implementation as part of the Safe Surgery 2020 initiative in Tanzania’s Lake Zone Region1 would improve teamwork and communication in the OR, and be associated with a reduction in maternal sepsis, sepsis and surgical site infections2.

INTRODUCTION

1) Risk of airway difficulty or aspiration
2) Risk of blood loss
3) Patient specific concerns – anesthesia provider
4) Patient specific concerns- surgical provider
5) Sterility of instruments and equipment
6) Equipment problems during surgery
7) Post-operative recovery concerns
8) Duration and difficulty of procedure

METHODS

Longitudinal, mixed methods, prospective evaluation of SSC implementation in 20 health facilities in Tanzania’s Lake Zone region.

SSC implementation: over a 9-month period.

RESULTS

High teamwork/communication adherence was significantly associated with lower rates of maternal sepsis (3.6% vs 1.5%; p=0.011).

The teamwork and communication prompts encourage sharing of critical information about the patient, procedures and any known risks, so that the team is better prepared for the surgery.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of the multi-component Safe Surgery 2020 initiative in Tanzania’s Lake Zone Region, SSC implementation has shown improvement in teamwork and communication in the OR, in a short period of time.

Higher adherence to teamwork and communication is associated with a reduction in sepsis rates, suggesting teamwork might be a mechanism through which patient outcomes are improved. More research is needed in this area.

REFERENCES


Change in adherence to teamwork and communication indicators from pre to post intervention was higher among intervention than control hospitals (48% vs 9%, p<0.001).

Greatest improvement observed in: sterility discussed at 59%, risk of blood loss discussed at 58% and airway & aspiration risk discussed at 54% (p<0.0001) post-intervention.

Association between Teamwork/Communication Adherence and Maternal Sepsis Rates

Teamwork/Communication Adherence

Low-Moderate (25%) High (> 25%)