The University of Nairobi team led by Prof. Qureshi (in the middle), Dr. Osoti (6th right) and Dr. Gwako (4th left) during the training of facility researchers at Bonds restaurant, Nairobi.

The University of Nairobi (UoN) has announced that it will join the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Maternal and Neonatal Sepsis Initiative, which aims to accelerate the reduction of preventable maternal and neonatal deaths related to sepsis, by participating in the Global Maternal Sepsis Study (GLOSS). The university has partnered with the Ministry of Health, Nairobi County and 11 public, private and mission hospitals in this exercise (Kenyatta National Hospital, Pumwani Maternity, Mama Lucy Kibaki, Mbagathi, Aga Khan, MP Shah, Coptic, Mater, St. Marys, Uhai Neema and St. Francis hospitals).

Every pregnant (or recently pregnant) woman and newborn baby is at risk of an infection that could trigger sepsis. Maternal sepsis continues to be a leading cause of death for women and newborns. Infections are the primary cause of about 35,000 maternal deaths. Sepsis can contribute to up to
100,000 maternal deaths. Sepsis kills more than 1 million newborns. Although sepsis is life-threatening, it can be stopped if identified early and treated promptly. Reducing maternal mortality and ending preventable deaths of newborns are essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3.

WHO has launched the Global Maternal and Neonatal Sepsis Initiative to tackle this critical condition and foster alignment, collaboration, research, innovation and advocacy efforts globally. In the first instance, WHO has developed a standardised definition of maternal sepsis to bring it in line with the current understanding of sepsis in the adult population: “Maternal sepsis is a life-threatening condition defined as organ dysfunction resulting from infection during pregnancy, child-birth, post-abortion, or post-partum period.”

GLOSS is a global study that will test and validate this new definition in 54 countries around the world, identifying women with infection over the course of 7 days between 28 November and 04 December 2017. Data collected from this study will be used to assess the burden and current management of maternal and early neonatal sepsis.

“Sepsis is an ever-present challenge in every hospital, but we have the opportunity to save the lives of women and babies in our care by working together to stop it. We are pleased to be partnering with WHO to tackle this life-threatening condition on a global scale. By participating in GLOSS, we will ensure that vital data from Kenya are included in this important study,” said Professor Zahida Qureshi, the GLOSS country principal investigator and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Nairobi.

“The World Health Organization recognizes the urgent need to pay more attention to this life-threatening but not-so-well-known condition,” said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of WHO. “We hope that the results of this study will improve our understanding of the prevalence of maternal sepsis, and how it is prevented and treated around the world.”

About University of Nairobi

The University of Nairobi, a body corporate established by an Act of Parliament Cap 210 of the Laws of Kenya is the pioneer institution of University education in Kenya and the region.

The only institution of higher learning in Kenya for a long time, the University of Nairobi responded to the national regional and Africa's high level manpower training needs by developing and evolving strong, diversified academic programmes and specializations in sciences, applied sciences, technology, humanities, social sciences and the arts. To date, the range of programmes offered number approximately two hundred.

The university is proud of its distinguished record of achievements in teaching, research, development and consultancy while strategizing for a greater future as the centre of academic, research and professional excellence.

About the Global Maternal and Neonatal Sepsis Initiative

The Global Maternal and Neonatal Sepsis Initiative was launched in early 2017 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Jhpiego (an affiliate of The Johns Hopkins University). Its goal is to accelerate the reduction of preventable maternal and neonatal deaths related to sepsis, by fostering alignment, collaboration, research, innovation and advocacy to eradicate sepsis and save women’s lives. [8]

About the Global Maternal Sepsis Study

The Global Maternal Sepsis Study (GLOSS) aims to provide the evidence base that will help to quantify the true burden and assess the current management of maternal and neonatal sepsis. The study will look at how women with infection during pregnancy, childbirth or postpartum, or post-abortion are identified and treated in participating hospitals. Over the course of one week (28 November to 04 December 2017) eligible women will be identified, prompting a coordinated data
collection effort in 54 countries and approximately 500 healthcare facilities around the world. The new maternal sepsis definition and potential identification criteria will be tested and validated in this large global study.


Maternal and Neonatal Sepsis fact sheets, Global Sepsis Alliance, 2017


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