

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

RESEARCH, ENTERPRISE AND SOCIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Implementing Family Integrated Care in Neonatal Intensive Care Units in Zambia

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Summary of project

Preterm birth (birth before 37 weeks of gestation) is a major cause of infant mortality and morbidity. The greatest burden of mortality and morbidity from preterm births occurs in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Family Integrated Care (FICare) is a programme of care which enables parents to become primary caregivers in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). The benefits of FICare were recently demonstrated in a multicentre, cluster randomised controlled trial in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. FICare significantly improved infant weight gain, increased exclusive breastfeeding and decreased parental anxiety at infant discharge. These findings are important as postnatal growth, breastfeeding and parental wellbeing are associated with long-term infant health outcomes. The expansion of FICare to other countries requires further research on the barriers that may limit its implementation, especially in LMICs with very different sociocultural contexts. In Zambia the preterm birth rate is high, approximately 13%. This collaborative project will involve conducting a qualitative study to scope the potential for adapting FICare to an African context (Zambia) for the first time. This will involve interviews and focus groups with mothers/partners and key stakeholders (e.g. healthcare professionals) to understand the facilitators and challenges of implementing FICare in Zambia.

Proposed outcomes

This project will ultimately provide high quality pilot data towards a substantive funding application(s) to implement and evaluate FICare in Zambia. Two highly relevant schemes have been identified that support challenge-focussed interdisciplinary health research in LMICs: i) The Global Maternal and Neonatal Health call - a joint initiative between the Medical Research Council (part of UK Research & Innovation, partly funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund) and the National Institute for Health Research. This call aims to address the burden of maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity in LMICs. Calls expected 2020 and 2021 (dates to be confirmed); and ii) The Joint Health Systems Initiative - supported by Department for International Development, ESRC, MRC and Wellcome Trust. This scheme funds research in LMICs to support health systems. The foundations grants within this scheme would be particularly relevant (funding up to £200,000). Calls expected 2020 and 2021 (dates to be confirmed). In addition, UoB was a partner on a recent H2020 application aimed at upscaling FICare in seven countries (SC1-BHC-2018), which did not receive funding at Stage 2 (applicant was PI for the UoB led work package, £244,000 costed for UoB). The consortium are discussing next stages and pilot data would be instrumental in preparation for future applications with the consortium.