

How do Malawian women rate the quality of maternal and newborn care? Experiences and perceptions of women in the central and southern regions

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Abstract

Background: While perceived quality of care is now widely advocated in health as influencing service utilization, there has been limited research to explore and measure perceived quality of care using composite quantitative methods. Our objective was to analyze the quality of maternal and newborn care using women's perceptions and to explore factors associated with such perceptions.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted in selected health facilities from March to May 2013. Exit interviews were conducted with 821 women conveniently sampled at exit of the maternity, antenatal and postnatal clinics using structured questionnaires. Experiences and the corresponding perceived quality of care were measured using a composite perception scale. The scale was made up of a series of statements (items) that were read out and the women were asked to rate the quality of care received, on a visual scale of 1 to 10. The higher the score the more highly quality was rated. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were used to analyse associations.

Results: A high perceived quality of care rating was observed on antenatal, postnatal and delivery care, with an overall mean score of 9 as compared to a possible maximum score of 10. Being literate, use of motorized transportation, self introduction by the health worker and confidentiality observance were associated with a high quality rating of the antenatal care. Explanation of examination procedures by the health worker was associated with high quality rating of the postnatal care and; being allowed to have a guardian and encouragement to ask questions was associated with a high quality rating of delivery care.

Conclusions: The study highlights some of the multiple factors associated with perceived quality of care. We conclude that proper interventions or practices and policies should consider these factors when making quality improvements.
