



Evaluating Quality of Care in Maternity Services

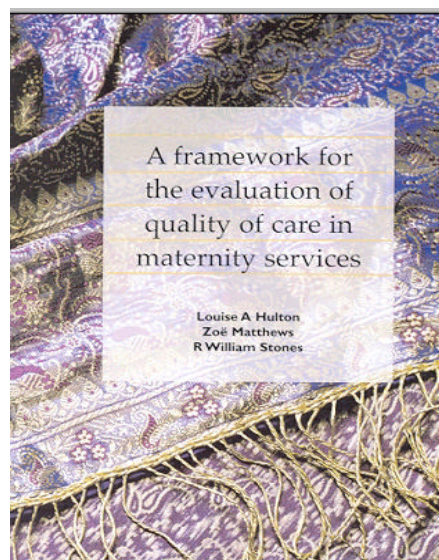
The question should not be why do women not accept the service that we offer, but why do we not offer a service that women will accept?

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Why Measure Quality?

All pregnant women are at potential risk of obstetric complications: however, the majority of complications can be treated if appropriate care is accessed promptly. Hence access to emergency obstetric care needs to be universal. However, the mere existence of services is not sufficient to reduce the level of maternal mortality and morbidity. Service providers must ensure that their facilities provide adequate high quality services.

Until now the focus on quality of care in reproductive health services has largely been restricted to family planning services. However, even beyond the field of family planning, quality is now recognised as an important dimension of reproductive health care provision.



Developing a Framework

Quality of care is not easy to measure or define, and the elements of quality care in maternity services have until now received little attention. A practical framework has been developed to facilitate the measurement of quality care in maternity services. The creation of this framework provides a basis from which a systematic improvement of care in maternal health care is possible.

Quality of Care

Background Work in India

The development of this framework is based on recent work conducted in Mumbai, India, although it is intended that the framework be transferred to a range of settings throughout the developing world. This framework has recently been published as a monograph, entitled "A Framework for the Evaluation of Quality Care in Maternity Services", which describes



Workshop held in November 2000 at the Madhya Pradesh Academy of Administration, presentations were made by Will Stones, Zoe Matthews and Alok Ranjan Chaurasia.

the ten key elements of quality maternity services. In addition, the monograph outlines the criteria and standards by which these elements of quality of care can be measured.

Working with Hospital Personnel

The ideas behind the framework have been disseminated at a number of medical and social science conferences, and in November 2000 a workshop was held in Bhopal, India with 45 health workers from Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring states. From this very successful meeting, further work has been generated in connection with the benchmarking of maternity facilities across a wide area around Bhopal.

To receive a copy of the monograph "A Framework for the evaluation of the quality of care in maternity services" by L. Hulton, Z. Matthews, and W. Stones, and for details about courses please contact Rosemary Lawrence, Rosemary Lawrence, Opportunities and Choices Programme, Department of Social Statistics, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17 1BJ, UK. Tel: +44 (0)23 8059 5763, Fax: +44 (0)23 8059 3846, E-mail: rl@socsci.soton.ac.uk