QUALITY OF MATERNAL CARE AT MATERNITY WAITING HOMES IN CHITIPA
DISTRICT IN NORTHERN MALAWI.

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Background
A maternity waiting home is a building located near a health facility where high or low risk
pregnant women who reside very far are accommodated to await labor and delivery. Maternity
waiting homes have been in existence in Malawi for more than a decade, however the maternal
mortality rate remains unacceptably high.

Purpose
The study analysed quality of maternal care at maternity waiting homes in Chitipa District based
on the Donabedian’s Structure Process and Outcome model.

Methods
A descriptive mixed methods study design was followed. Two semi-structured questionnaires
were used to collect quantitative data from 82 nurses/clinicians with more than 4 years’ work
experience, and 48 pregnant mothers (aged between 18 and 38, given birth more than once and
attained primary education). Individual in-depth interviews were done with 15 guardians (aged
between 36 to 40 years) of pregnant waiting mothers in maternal waiting homes. An observation
checklist was used to collect data on the availability of resources for maternal waiting homes.
Quantitative data were analysed with the aid of SPSS 20.0 while qualitative data were analysed
manually through thematic analysis.

Results
The idea of maternal waiting homes was welcomed by the majority of nurses/clinicians, pregnant
waiting mothers and their guardians. However, 92.7% (n=76) of nurses/clinicians lacked
knowledge on maternal waiting homes implementation. Consequently, they provided sub-optimal
maternal care. Users of maternal waiting homes faced many challenges which included poor
condition of the shelter, lack of basic resources such as food and soap to support hospital stay,
scarcity of resources such as medications and a high workload to nurses and clinicians.
Conclusion
Quality of maternal care provided at maternal waiting homes was poor in the Chitipa District with shortfalls in all the elements of quality, namely structure, process and outcome according to Donabedian’s model. Essentially, the findings indicate potential that maternal care provided at maternal waiting homes might improve if highlighted areas in the study findings are addressed.

Implications
The findings inform policy and practice by unearthing the need for clear guidelines on maternal care to be provided in maternal waiting homes. On the other hand, the positive attitudes held by the users of these facilities provide potential for improvement of maternal health in Malawi.

Key Words
Maternal and Child Health
Maternity Waiting Homes
Maternal care

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Ethics Approval
Permission to conduct the study was granted by College of Medicine Research Ethic Committee (COMREC), Malawi

Preference
Poster