Active prevention and treatment of maternal sepsis in health care facilities in Malawi and Uganda

Submission dateRecruitment status[X] Prospectively registered19/08/2022No longer recruiting[X] Protocol

Registration date Overall study status [X] Statistical analysis plan

10/10/2022 Completed [X] Results

Last Edited Condition category [Individual participant data

20/11/2025 Infections and Infestations

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Every 4 minutes, a mother dies from a sepsis-related cause somewhere in the world, with the greatest burden borne by women in Low-Middle Income Countries (LMICs). The Active Prevention and Treatment of Maternal Sepsis (APT-Sepsis) is a carefully developed programme designed specifically to be used in countries and facilities where there are limited resources available. It aims to change health care workers' behaviours to ensure mothers get the best care possible to better prevent and manage infections. APT-Sepsis involves 60 hospital facilities (30 in Malawi and 30 in Uganda). Each facility will be a cluster from which baseline (starting) data will be collected before the start of the APT-sepsis intervention. Then 30 clusters (15 in each country) will be randomised for the APT-sepsis intervention, the remaining sites will continue with their usual practices. The study will evaluate if running the APT-sepsis programme is effective at reducing infection-related maternal death and disease burden. Process evaluation will also be conducted to understand how the programme works in practice and its cost-effectiveness.

Who can participate?

Health care facilities offering maternity care will be included as a cluster following completion of a successful feasibility report requiring the minimum prerequisites of a minimum of 1500 births per year and they provide comprehensive emergency obstetric care. Staff who are invited to complete the interviews and surveys will be healthcare workers who are responsible for the care of pregnant or postnatal women and who are willing to participate.

What does the study involve?

Clusters will be randomised to the study intervention or the control group. The intervention is a training programme that brings together evidence-based practice for the prevention of maternal sepsis. The study will evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention by measuring the incidents of severe infection, maternal deaths and near misses before and after randomisation. The study will also evaluate the staff experience, measuring their acceptability and compliance

with the intervention through interviews, surveys and observations. Sites in the control group will also be evaluated to see if their practice changes. Following the completion of the project, all participating sites will be offered the opportunity to receive the training.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

In this study, the Clusters (hospital facilities) are the participants. Providing the APT-Sepsis programme training to staff will improve their knowledge and understanding of the prevention, identification and treatment of maternal sepsis and consequently reduce cases of maternal sepsis in their cluster. These are evidence-based practices (treatments which have been previously researched) to reduce maternal sepsis, therefore the risks are low.

Where is the study run from? Liverpool Clinical Trials Centre, the University of Liverpool (United Kingdom)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for? February 2021 to October 2025

Who is funding the study? This project is supported by the Joint Global Health Scheme (United Kingdom)

Who is the main contact? Sonia Whyte (United Kingdom) apt-sepsis@liverpool.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)

Public

Contact name

Mrs Sonia Whyte

ORCID ID

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Type(s)

Principal investigator

Contact name

Prof David Lissauer

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Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)

Nil known

Protocol serial number

UoL001663

Study information

Scientific Title

The Active Prevention and Treatment of Maternal Sepsis: A cluster randomised, hybrid implementation effectiveness trial, to improve prevention and management of maternal sepsis in health care facilities in Malawi and Uganda

Acronym

APT-Sepsis

Study objectives

To examine the implementation of the APT-Sepsis programme and understand if it is effective at reducing infection related maternal mortality and severe morbidity in resource limited settings.

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

- 1. Approved 13/07/2022, College of Medicine Research and Ethics Malawi (Private Bag 360), Chichiri Blantyre 3, (Blantyre, Blantyre, 3, Malawi; 265 187 4377; mandal@medcol.mw), ref: 3635 2. Approved 24/02/2023, Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (Plot 6, PO Box 6884, , Kampala, x, Uganda; 256 414 707700; info@uncst.go.ug), ref: HS2613ES 3. Approved 07/09/2022, University of Liverpool, Central University Research Ethics Committee
- D (Brownlow Hill,, Liverpool, L69 7ZX, United Kingdom; 0151; ethics@liv.ac.uk), ref: 11309
- 4. Approved 08/12/2022, Infectious Diseases Institute Research Ethics Committee (IDI-REC office, Mulago, 12345,, Milago, 12345, Uganda; +256 39 319 3144; rec@idi.co.ug), ref: 022/2022

5. Approved 26/01/2023, WHO/HQ/FWC/RHR (20, Avenue Appia, Geneva, CH-1211, Switzerland; 41 22 791 4171; reproductivehealth@who.int), ref: A66039

Study design

Cluster-randomized hybrid-implementation effectiveness study

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Prevention

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Maternal Sepsis

Interventions

The APT-Sepsis intervention brings together evidence-based practice to address maternal sepsis prevention and treatment via an integrated programme with three interventional domains and an implementation strategy.

- 1.The first interventional domain is 'hand hygiene', ensuring compliance with the WHO 5 movements of hand hygiene.
- 2. The second interventional domain is infection prevention and management and ensures adoption of evidence-based practices for infection prevention in maternity, including appropriate antibiotic prophylaxis for high-risk women and improved surgical practices.
- 3. The third interventional domain is better sepsis management and consists of ensuring consistent measurement of patient vital signs and when there is suspected sepsis the triggering of the FAST-M maternal sepsis bundle. This bundle includes Fluids, Antibiotics, Source control, Transfer and Monitoring.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

Composite outcome of infection-related maternal mortality, infection-related maternal nearmiss and severe infection-related morbidity (deep surgical site infection or body cavity infection) measured by the collection of daily observations from routine health facility records from all women who are admitted to the healthcare facility, during pregnancy or within 42 days of delivery with a severe infection from the baseline phase to the end of cluster participation

Key secondary outcome(s))

- 1. Effectiveness of the APT-Sepsis programme to reduce the secondary clinical outcomes of stillbirth, early neonatal death (infection-related and total), maternal mortality (any cause), and a maternal near miss (any cause) measured using daily observations of the routine health facility records from the baseline phase to the end of cluster participation
- 2. Differential or subgroup effects of the APT-Sepsis programme defined by country, facility size, and high versus low performing facilities at the end of the study
- 3. Fidelity, sustainability, acceptability and context of the APT-sepsis programme in Malawi and Uganda, to facilitate interpretation of trial outcomes and development of a longer-term implementation strategy, measured using observations, interviews, and surveys conducted from randomisation to the end of cluster participation

4. Health economic analysis to determine if the APT-Sepsis programme was cost effective measured using data collected during the study, and will be based on the principal outcome of the trial and be reported in terms of disaggregated costs and consequences and cost per major outcome averted where the major outcome is defined as maternal infection-related mortality and severe morbidity.

Completion date

31/07/2025

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

Cluster: Health care facilities offering maternity care, will be included as a cluster following the completion of a successful feasibility report requiring the minimum prerequisites of:

- 1. A minimum of 1500 births per year
- 2. Providers of comprehensive emergency obstetric care (e.g., able to perform caesarean sections and blood transfusions)
- 3. Completed the site readiness assessment process

Research participant:

Healthcare workers and managers responsible for the care of women during or after pregnancy in the study facility

Participant type(s)

Other

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

431394

Key exclusion criteria

Cluster exclusion criteria:

Facilities not willing to participate in the study

Research participant exclusion criteria:

Healthcare workers not willing to consent to participation

Date of first enrolment

13/11/2022

Date of final enrolment

24/06/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment

Malawi

Uganda

Study participating centre Balaka district hospital

Private Bag 138, Balaka Malawi 302100

Study participating centre Chikwawa district hospital

P.O.Box 32 Chikwawa Malawi 315100

Study participating centre Chiradzulu district hospital

Private Bag 21 Chiradzulu Malawi 306100

Study participating centre Dedza district hospital

P.O.Box 136 Dedza Malawi 209100

Study participating centre Ekwendeni mission hospital

P.O. Box 19 Mzimba Malawi 104104

Study participating centre Holy Family Mission Hospital

P.O. Box 144 Phalombe Malawi 307100

Study participating centre Karonga district hospital

Private Bag 1 Karonga Malawi 102100

Study participating centre Kasungu district hospital

P.O.Box 19 Kasungu Malawi 201300

Study participating centre Machinga district hospital

P.O.Box 44 Liwonde Malawi 303100

Study participating centre Malamulo mission hospital

Private Bag 2 Thyolo Malawi 310111

Study participating centre Mangochi district hospital

P.O.Box 42

Mangochi Malawi 301400

Study participating centre Mchinji district hospital

P.O.Box 36 Mchinji Malawi 205100

Study participating centre Monkeybay Community Hospital

P.O. Box 42 Mangochi Malawi 301109

Study participating centre Mua Mission hospital

P O Box 45 Dedza Malawi 209104

Study participating centre Mulanje district hospital

P.O.Box 227 Mulanje Malawi 308100

Study participating centre Mulanje Mission hospital

P.O. Box 45 Mulanje Malawi 308104

Study participating centre Mwanza district hospital

P.O.Box 80 Mwanza Malawi 314100

Study participating centre Mzimba South district hospital

P.O.Box 131 Mzimba Malawi 104100

Study participating centre Nkhata Bay district hospital

P.O.Box 4 Nkhatabay Malawi 106100

Study participating centre Nkhoma Mission Hospital

P.O. Box 48 Lilongwe Malawi 206111

Study participating centre Nkhotakota district hospital

P.O.Box 50 Nkhotakota Malawi 202100

Study participating centre Nsanje district hospital

P.O.Box 30 Nsanje Malawi 316100

Study participating centre Ntcheu district hospital

Private Bag 5 Ntcheu Malawi 210100

Study participating centre Ntchisi district hospital

P.O.Box 44 Ntchisi Malawi 203100

Study participating centre Rumphi district hospital

P.O.Box 225 Rumphi Malawi 103100

Study participating centre Salima district hospital

P.O.Box 53 Salima Malawi 208100

Study participating centre St Gabriel mission hospital

Private Bag 1 Namitete Lilongwe Malawi 206115

Study participating centre St Lukes mission hospital

P.O. Box 21

Chilema Malawi 304102

Study participating centre Thyolo district hospital

P.O.Box 21 Thyolo Malawi 310100

Study participating centre Arua RRH

P.O BOX 3 Arua Uganda

Study participating centre Koboko Hospital

P.O BOX 1 Koboko Uganda

Study participating centre Adjumani Hospital

P.O BOX 20 Adjumani Uganda

Study participating centre Nebbi Hospital

P.O BOX 3 Nebbi Uganda

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Study participating centre Yumbe HC4

P.O BOX 27 Arua City Uganda

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Study participating centre Moyo Hospital

P.O BOX 1 Moyo Uganda

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Study participating centre Mukono General Hospital

P.O BOX 472 Mukono Uganda

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Study participating centre Kawolo Hospital

PO BOX 210 Lugazi Uganda

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Study participating centre Jinja RRH

P.O BOX 43 Jinja Uganda

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Study participating centre Bugiri Hospital

P.O BOX 97 Bugiri Uganda

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Study participating centre Kamuli Hospital

P.O BOX 88 Kamuli Uganda

Study participating centre Iganga Hospital

P.O BOX 745 Iganga Uganda

Study participating centre Mbale RRH

P.O BOX 921 Mbale Uganda

Study participating centre Luwero Hospital

P.O BOX 34 Luwero Uganda

Study participating centre Nakaseke Hospital

P.O BOX 1022 Nakaseke Uganda

Study participating centre Kiboga Hospital **P.O BOX 17**

Kiboga Uganda

Study participating centre Masindi Hospital

P.O BOX 29 Masindi Uganda

Study participating centre Kiryandogo Hospital

P.O BOX 128 Kigumba Uganda

Study participating centre Lira RRH

P.O BOX 2 Lira

Uganda

Study participating centre Soroti RRH

P.O BOX 289 Soroti Uganda

Study participating centre Gulu RRH

P.O BOX 160 Gulu Uganda

Study participating centre Fortportal RRH

P.O BOX 10 Fortportal Uganda

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Study participating centre Kyejonjo General Hospital

PO Box 188 Kyejonjo Uganda

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Study participating centre Mubende RRH

PO Box 4 Mubende Uganda

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Study participating centre Kalisizo General Hospital

PO Box 40 Kyotera Uganda

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Study participating centre Gombe General Hospital

PO Box 145 Mpigi Uganda

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Study participating centre Tororo General Hospital

PO Box 1 Tororo Uganda

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Study participating centre Pallisa General Hospital

PO Box 14 Pallisa Uganda

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Study participating centre Atutur General Hospital

PO Box 22 Kumi Uganda

Study participating centre Katakwi General Hospital

PO Box private bag Katawi Uganda

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Study participating centre Phalombe district hospital

P.O. Box 79 Phalombe Malawi 307100

Sponsor information

Organisation

University of Liverpool

ROR

https://ror.org/04xs57h96

Funder(s)

Funder type

Government

Funder Name

UK Research and Innovation Joint Global Health Trials Grant ref: MRV005782/1

Alternative Name(s)

UKRI

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

National government

Location

United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

At the end of the trial, after the primary results have been published, the anonymised individual participant data (IPD) and associated documentation (e.g., protocol, statistical analysis plan, annotated blank CRF) will be prepared to be shared with external researchers. All requests for access to the IPD will be reviewed by an internal committee at the CTU and discussed with the Chief Investigator in accordance with the CTU policy on data sharing.

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type Results article	Details	Date created 19/11/2025	Date added 20/11/2025	Peer reviewed? Yes	Patient-facing? No
<u>Protocol file</u>	Malawi version 6.0	07/11/2024	09/04/2025	No	No
Protocol file	Uganda version 3.0	07/11/2024	09/04/2025	No	No
Statistical Analysis Plan	version 2.0	04/08/2025	26/09/2025	No	No
Statistical Analysis Plan	version 1.0	23/07/2025	26/09/2025	No	No