Joint WHO-MoH Facilitators Meeting on Integrated Management for Emergency & Essential Surgical Care
Towards strengthening Primary Health Care Capacities

Monrovia, Liberia
30 Sept.- 03 October 08

Background:

Liberia has 15 counties and 15 county hospitals, which are surrounded by several health centers (with 15-20 beds) and several health clinics. County hospitals do not have specialists and all surgical procedures are provided by General Doctors. Health centers do not have doctors and most minor surgical procedures are provided by nurses or Physician Assistants. Liberia, a country with a population of 3.5 million people, has only 3 Liberian Surgeons and no Liberian Anesthesiologist.

Objectives:

- Visit to the Health facilities for meetings and situation analysis on Emergency & Essential Surgical Care
- Introduce the WHO Global Initiative for Emergency & Essential Surgical Care
- Assess the utility of the WHO Integrated Management for Emergency & Essential Surgical Care (IMEESC) toolkit for strengthening capacities at primary health care through training general doctors and physician assistants in county hospitals and health centers

Health Facilities Visit:

- Visits were made by a team representing WHO-MoH to health facilities in 5 counties for meetings and formulate a situation analysis on emergency & essential surgical care. The following Health Facilities were visited:
  1. Montserrado County
Introduction

Introductions were made by Dr. Bernice T. Dahn, CMO, Deputy Health Minister, to the members of the Top Management Team in the Ministry of Health meeting session. Dr Meena Cherian introduced the WHO IMEESC toolkit and the role of the Global Initiative for Emergency & Essential Surgical Care. The objective of the visit to Liberia upon the request from the MoH was briefly discussed. The WHO IMEESC toolkit (www.who.int/surgery/publications/imeesc) has been introduced in 29 countries through the WHO-MoH with the objective of building capacities in basic surgical life and disability saving skills at various levels of care using the integrated approach for strengthening health systems through task shifting.

Discussions:

- Discussions were held with the key policy makers and health providers at the Joint WHO-MoH meeting on Integrated Management for Emergency & Essential Surgical Care (IMEESC) towards strengthening primary health care capacities. Liberia has only 3 qualified Liberian general surgeons and no anesthesiologist for a population of 3.5 million. Hence, it is an urgent need to train health providers in
county hospitals and health centers to handle effectively emergency surgical procedures in trauma and pregnancy related complications.

- Discussions were held with the directors of the health facilities for completion of the WHO Situation Analysis tool to assess emergency and essential surgical care (www.who.int/surgery/publications/QuickSitAnalysisEESCsurvey.pdf). These will be entered in the global database to obtain an overview of access to basic life and disability saving emergency, surgical and anesthesia interventions at secondary and primary health care facilities

- Data on health facilities will be analysed for a paper publication and this will provide baselines evidence on gaps and development of plans to address the gaps to access life and disability saving emergency, surgical and anesthesia procedures and equipment at secondary and primary health care facilities

- Free doctor to doctor SMS and calls within the Lone Star Cell Network has been provided for doctors within Liberia through the instrumentality of the Africa Aid and the Lone Star Cell Company

**Recommendations:**

- Partnerships should be developed with stakeholders (NGOs, UN programs) for strengthening health systems with an integrated approach for emergency and surgical interventions

- Modify medical education curriculum to meet WHO IMEESC toolkit

- WHO Situation analysis tool to asses EESC should be conducted for all 15 county hospitals and few health centers representing each county

- Data to be analysed at WHO and results shared through publication of a paper with assistance provided by WHO GIEESC

- WHO manual to be disseminated to all county hospitals

- More copies of the WHO IMEESC toolkit to be made available through the MoH for all county hospitals

- Hardcopies of the WHO Best Practice Protocols to be disseminated to all health centers

- Essential Emergency Equipment (WHO generic EEE list) to be considered as the basic package for health facilities

- Collaborations on an integrated approach with NGOs implementing Emergency Obstetric Care at primary health care

- Assistance to be provided by the GIEESC members for training in surgery (pediatric surgery, orthopedic), anesthesia at tertiary hospitals and county hospitals
- Consider working towards establishing a WCC for research and training skills
- Project proposal to be planned for inclusion of EESC in basic health care package towards strengthening health systems in the round 9 GFTAM proposal
- Partnerships with UNFPA for collaborative activities for strengthening capacities in EESC through the Emergency Obstetric Care project
- Liberia to propose the need for a resolution to the World Health Assembly on Basic Surgical Care as part of the Primary Health Care package
- Set up some centers to serve as skills training units in collaboration with the WHO
- Potential for using the telephone services at health centers for doctor consultation

**Action/Follow-up:**
- Identify GIEESC members for assistance to directors in medical school faculty for clinical teaching in surgery, anesthesia
- Support to the tentative TOT workshop on IMEESC in 2008
- Send 15 WHO IMEESC toolkit and 15 SCDH manual for dissemination to all county hospitals
- Assistance to be provided for the preparation of the meeting report, which will be disseminated through the website
- Support to the publication of a paper on surgical capacity in Liberia
- Collaborative activities with the GIEESC members Biomedical Engineers to support medical equipment maintenance in Liberia
- Collaborations on research (using WHO Situational Analysis for EESC), training in IMEESC toolkit and Skills Workshop with UNFPA
- Prepare report on the joint WHO-MoH Facilitators Meeting on IMEESC for wide dissemination
- Distribute and retrieve situational analysis forms
- Complete distribution of WHO manual Surgical Care at the District Hospital and WHO IMEESC toolkit received from WHO
- Distribute hard copies of *Best Practice Protocols for Clinical Procedures Safety* for putting as posters at the point of care
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