

# Dissertation Research on Maternal-Newborn Health in Rural Zambia

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## Country/City

Zambia

- Lundazi District, Eastern Province
- Mansa District, Luapula Province

## Background & Significance

- Decreasing newborn morbidity and mortality remains a serious global health challenge in low- and middle-income countries.
- In Zambia, the newborn mortality rate is 34 per 1000 live births.
- Maternity waiting homes (MWHs) may offer an intervention to improve newborn outcomes and perinatal obstetric care.
- Research on the effect of MWH use on newborn health outcomes is limited.
- This dissertation will add to the literature on the impact of MWH use on newborn health.



## Experience

### Information

- In Zambia, I conducted research for three studies in my dissertation with the overarching goal of investigating the potential benefits of maternity waiting home use to improve newborn health outcomes.
- Agency/Community Partner: Africare NGO, Zambian Ministry of Health, University of Zambia

### Research Goals

1. Describe knowledge and beliefs of newborn care and illness from the perspective of rural Zambian women, community members, and health workers
2. Examine the social and cultural factors that influence ways women seek newborn care to identify traditional and professional newborn care practices in rural Zambia
3. Examine newborn and maternal health outcomes for women referred from health facilities with MWH and non-MWH health facilities
4. Assess maternal knowledge of newborn care for MWH and non-MWH users referred to a district hospital for delivery.

### Outcomes

- Five major themes emerged from focus group discussions including: (1) cultural influences of newborn care, (2) financial constraints, (3) distance, (4) fear of disgrace, and (5) shortage of midwives.
- Younger age and attendance at fewer ANC visits show significant relationships with lower maternal knowledge of newborn care.

### Skills Utilized/Developed

- Gained hands-on international research experience.
- Positively contributed to a cultural exchange with community members from diverse backgrounds.
- Acted as an ambassador for the University of Michigan by disseminating our School of Nursing's global vision to influence the world through the impact of nursing research, educational programs and practice innovations on health.

### Lessons Learned

- Learned how to identify opportunities for international collaboration in nursing research, evidence-based practice, education, and health policy.
- Deepened my understanding of global health and maternal-newborn nursing research.



## Career Connections

- My eventual goal as a PhD nurse-scientist is to positively contribute to the discipline of pediatric global health by performing revolutionary scientific research and teaching.
- I intend to take full advantage of lessons learned in the PhD Program to generate new knowledge and develop relationships to explore innovative ways of preventing newborn mortality worldwide.

## Advice

- Approach global health nursing with an open heart and open mind.

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