High quality care in the operating room is delivered by surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses who work and train together. The SAFE Operating Room course (SAFE OR) has been developed in recognition of the need for multidisciplinary training to support safe surgery, and in response to the World Health Assembly resolution 68.15 to strengthen emergency and essential surgery, obstetrics and anaesthesia at district/first level referral hospitals.

The Royal College of Surgeons (England), Association of Anaesthetists, World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists, Association for Perioperative Practice, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Lifebox developed the SAFE OR course in partnership with surgeons, anaesthetists, obstetricians and nurses in Ethiopia and Uganda.
SAFE Operating Room Course

Course design

SAFE OR is a two-day short course, delivered in an interactive style with a few key lectures and rotating breakout sessions that include discussions, demonstrations and low fidelity simulation. Course participants are surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses who work together in the OR, ideally 32 participants per course, with a minimum of 4 experienced instructors and one course director. There is a ‘train the trainer course’ for local faculty and key items of equipment (e.g. manikins for simulation) can be donated to ensure sustainability. Participants all receive a course manual that closely mirrors the instructor manual.

Course content

The course content is based on the WHO Standards for Safe Surgery and includes sessions on leadership, teamwork, communication and decision-making. These key messages are highlighted and reinforced throughout. Other key topics include surgical site infection reduction, anaesthesia and surgical emergencies and the principles of enhanced recovery. The course participants are given an opportunity to role-play the WHO Surgical Checklist, and strategies to introduce team briefing and to handle conflict resolution. Sessions on procurement, quality improvement and audit are included to support participants to deliver safer care when they return to their place of work.

Outcomes

The SAFE OR course was launched in 2017 and has been delivered to teams of surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses in Ethiopia and Uganda, with positive feedback, improvements in knowledge, and evidence of positive behaviour change after training.

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