

Job Aids in Immunizations and Birthing – the PATH Vaccine Vial Monitor and Safer Birthing Kit By Linda Bruce, PATH

Ed Kelly: I used to do a lot of sailing when I was younger, as I would stow away on the boats of people who actually had enough money to own a boat. I remember this funny story that a guy I used to sail with all the time told me. He said the first time he went out, they were sailing on a multi-day race, and they were going a long way from land. He turned to his shipmate and said, “Boy, I’ve never seen so much water!” And this older sailor who was sailing with them who was always wise-cracking said, “You ain’t seen nothing, that’s just the top of it.”

In that spirit, I know we’ve got a lot in this particular panel, but it’s all really good information. I’d like to introduce our next presenter, who very graciously agreed to summarize all that PATH knows about job aids for us. She’s worked with them for quite a bit of time, and she’s now senior program officer. Linda Bruce has over 15 years’ experience partnering with local counterparts, ministries of health, PVOs, and NGOs, and has been focusing on training and IC for maternal and child health and nutrition. She’s going to talk about a couple of the specific job aids that PATH has recently been involved with.

Linda Bruce: A lot of you know PATH has worked on pre-testing materials and low-literate materials and that kind of thing I’m here to talk about two technologies and how they’ve been used as job aids.

First of all, one is a clean delivery kit. A clean delivery kit is really just a prepackaged kit that has some essentials to keep the cord clean, basically, and a cleaner delivery, and this is an example. It’s a little tiny teeny thing with a plastic sheet, it has a little soap bar, it has a razor, it has some cord ties and a hard surface for cutting the cord so you don’t have to cut it on a rock or something like that. It endorses the WHO’s six principles of cleanliness, which are, obviously, keep your hands clean, you need a clean delivery service, clean perineum, you need a clean cord cutting instrument, cord ties, and clean cord care of the newborn.

What the PATH office did also was to work a lot on the instruction kits. Basically, you wash your hands, you assist with the delivery right there, and once the baby’s born, it’s a very long pictorial, but it goes on and it shows you how to cut the cord, etc., and it’s a very simple pictorial that’s been pre-tested ad nauseum almost everywhere.

Essential kits are available at delivery; they’re conveniently pre-packaged, they’re new, clean medical supplies, and they reduce the risk of using unclean items. Items in the kit and pictorial instructions are there, you’ve got the tools and you’ve got the instructions on how to use them. The qualitative research indicated that use of the kit really did help reduce some cord infections and also helps improve cleaning the umbilical cord, which is a major step since neonatal tetanus is a very big issue in a lot of these countries. However, it did not prevent different kinds of substances from being added to the cord once the cord had been cut. The pictorials also did not address that.

With the TBAs who use the kit— and this kit can also be used, hopefully with trained TBAs but also with untrained TBAs, and women who are just assisting with births in households, but there was increased hand-washing among the untrained TBAs. The kit users washed their hands more frequently. The kit was used because people felt it was very convenient, they liked the pictorial instructions on how to use it and it did increase awareness of clean delivery practices besides using the kit.

I just wanted to emphasize that a clean delivery kit is not an end-all to your problems. It needs to be integrated into a much larger safe delivery program. It also needs to have wide areas of distribution and should be linked with any kind of tetanus toxoid immunization campaign. It is distributed in trainings with TBAs, but there is a local distribution in the community. The pictorial is on the side and they’re distributing it within the community in Nepal.

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Vial monitors for vaccines are technologies that PATH has been working on for a long time. We want to make sure that people can use them properly because unless you use them properly they're not very effective. Vial monitors are essentially these things right here, you'll see a little round circle here, this is a different kind of vial that's used for a vaccine, this is used with injections, here's another monitor right here and it's very light but you've got them all over the place.

Now, can this be used? If you were a health worker, if you were a national immunization officer, you're going into the field, you see your vial and it looks like this, can you use it? These are the basic, this is an older version of a poster that we use but right here, if it's white in the middle you can use it if it's not past expiration date, again, if it's lighter you can use it, if it's this way you cannot use it, so the vial monitor that I showed you a minute ago cannot be used, so you need to discard it, and right here, if it's darker, you definitely need to discard it. Right now, vial monitors are used on all vaccines purchased by UNICEF as of 2001 and also they significantly contributed to WHO's multi-dose policy, because it's another way of safeguarding the safe use of vaccines.

This is a sticker, that's put on refrigerators, put on the vaccine carrying kits, they're everywhere. If you see on your bottle that the square's right there you use it, if it's lighter you better use it first, if you've got this in here, throw it away, don't use it anymore. Basically you can't get any simpler than that.

Some quick lessons learned, the vaccine vial monitors have definitely helped to prevent the delivery of heat damaged vaccines. They're also used to detect problems with [inaudible] (wastage?), particularly if the vaccine wastage is documented. I just wanted to show you an example. Here is one of those posters there and on the side right here is another poster, so this is a refrigerator and this is a vaccine carrier that you would take out into the field. It helps facilitate the outreach, especially for national immunization days, and they are cost-effective. When heat exposure occurs, the vial monitors indicate which ones can be saved and which ones need to be thrown away. They facilitate the multi-dose vial policy.

I just want to show you some research that was done with multi-dosing and wastage. Here you have your baseline of wastage rates. When you use it in combination with your multi-dose vial policy you have this wastage rate right here, so there's clearly a difference and here's a percentage reduction in wastage, so it has proven to be a very effective tool. Your tool is basically on the vial, but you have a very simple sticker that tells you what to do, color coordinated with very simple instructions. This is a very good use of our monitor sticker.