

Introduction

Clinical mentorship is a structured and supportive relationship between an experienced clinician (the mentor) and a less experienced one (the mentee). [20] It's a process focused on the mentee's professional growth, aiming to improve their clinical skills, knowledge, and overall competence in providing high-quality patient care. [21]

The following report details a clinical mentorship program at Haydom Lutheran Hospital (HLH) focused on the practice of vacuum-assisted births (VAB).

Mentorship Visits and Activities

This report describes the activities of the first for visits of over two years by Dr. Anna Sand from Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden.

1st Mentorship Visit (October 2022)

- **Focus:** Teamwork and effective communication in the labor ward
- **Mentor:** Dr. Anna Sand, obstetrician at Karolinska University Hospital/Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden.
- **Activities:** A diagnostic assessment was conducted with the local VAB committee to identify the current situation and the needs of the doctors and midwives. A workshop was held to draft a standard operating procedure (SOP) and a checklist, which also served to strengthen the VAB committee. Conducted mentor-led lectures, team simulations, and skills training sessions to emphasize the importance of teamwork as a core component of safe VAB. Debriefing sessions were also modeled and provided after every VAB.
- **Outcome:** A strong emphasis on teamwork as a foundational component for Safe Vacuum was established.

During the first mentorship visit a diagnostic assessment was conducted together with the local VAB Committee (core team) to identify the current situation, the perceptions and concerns of the doctors and midwives and their needs in the maternity unit for setting training relevant objectives and desired outcomes.

A workshop to draft the SOP and checklist was initiated together with the local VAB committee (that helped strengthen the VAB committee as a unit for future activities).

Dr. A Sand was there for over two weeks to conduct mentor-led lectures, team simulations, as well as skill training sessions for all the facility health care providers to emphasize the importance of teamwork as a core component of a best practice for safe VAB. Clinical mentoring (coaching and timely feedback) provided an opportunity to model a debriefing practice after every VAB.

After the 1st and every following mentorship visit, Dr. A. Sand reviewed outcomes together with VAB committee (core team) according to the planned activities which served as a checklist for self-assessment of the overall progress.

During each following mentorship visit, the progress of set goals and outcomes were reviewed together with the local VAB committee. That helped to establish accountability and commitment to achieve the set goal (of increased VAB application by 5% in 2024).

2nd Mentorship Visit (March 2023)

- **Focus:** VAB skill proficiency.
- **Activities:** Review of activities and progress, discussion of VAB cases with the core team, mentor-led skill training sessions, facilitated discussions on VAB cases.
- **Outcome:** Enhanced skill proficiency among staff involved in VAB teams.
- During the 2nd mentorship visit mentor-led skill training sessions were organized for all the staff involved in VAB teams and facilitated discussions on VAB cases. Dr. Sand was available for clinical mentoring and debriefing all time during her stay at HLH.

3rd Mentorship Visit (November 2023)

- **Focus:** Patient selection and decision making.
- **Activities:** Review of patient cases and progress on VAB implementation, lectures on the normal physiology of labor and delivery, identifying and selecting patients for VAB, clinical mentoring and debriefing.
- **Outcome:** Improved patient selection and decision-making processes were observed.

Apart from reviewing patient cases, and the progress on VAB implementation activities, Dr. Sand conducted lectures on identifying and selecting patients who would benefit from VAB for all the facility staff. Dr.

Sand was available for clinical mentoring and debriefing throughout her stay at HLH for 10 days. As well as supporting the core team in their work of organizing and facilitating training, team simulation sessions and debriefing.

4th Mentorship Visit (March 2024)

- **Focus:** Mentoring practice
- **Activities:** Lectures and workshops on mentor/mentee dynamics, clinical mentoring and debriefing sessions.
- **Outcome:** Strengthened mentor/mentee relationships and sustained support for the VAB committee were established.

During the mentorship visit over a week at HLH, lectures and workshops led by Dr. A. Sand on mentor/mentee dynamics were organized for all facility staff at the labour ward.

She made herself available for clinical mentoring and debriefing sessions during her stay at HLH. Continuous support for the VAB committee was provided by the mentor every visit.



Dr. Anna Sand - mentor with maternity personnel at HLH

Operational Challenges

Two core operational challenges hinder the sustained delivery of expert care for Vacuum-Assisted Birth (VAB):

- **Team expertise.** The regular rotation of medical and nursing staff across different departments and facilities causes a significant drain on accumulated expertise. When a clinician who has achieved a high degree of proficiency in vacuum extractions transfers.

"It may happen that someone has gained significant experience and become skilled at performing vacuum extractions, but then that person is transferred to another hospital and is no longer part of the team." Says Anna Sand.

- **Requirement for constant readiness.** VAB procedures are unscheduled emergencies that can occur at any hour.

"Suddenly it is time, at any hour of the day or night, and the team needs to be available. It is an emergency procedure and requires competence within the team that is present." Says Anna Sand.



Progress and Outcomes

Data from the "HLH Monthly Numbers of Safe Vacuum Birth 2022-2024" chart shows an overall increasing trend in the number of vacuum births performed, with notable increases following each mentorship visit. The mentorship program has helped establish accountability and commitment to achieve the set goal of increased VAB application by 5% in 2024.

Conclusion

The clinical mentorship program at HLH, led by Dr. Anna Sand, has demonstrably contributed to the professional growth of the facility's healthcare providers. Through structured visits, focused training sessions, and continuous support, the program has effectively improved teamwork, skill proficiency, patient selection, and internal mentoring practices, ultimately enhancing the quality of patient care in the labor ward.

The work identified 3 main focus areas for clinical mentors: 1) To mitigate fear; 2) To grow individual and teams and 3) To lead by example.

HLH Monthly Numbers of Safe Vacuum Birth 2022 - 2024

