Operational Research

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Objectives of session

- Identify how operational research can contribute to **operational objectives**
- Understand process and components of OR through **examples**
- Identify available **resources** for OR
Quiz 1

Is MSF a research organization?

A. Yes, it is!
B. No, it is not!
C. I have no clue!
Operational research

Implementation Research (IR/IS)

Health Systems Research (HSR)

Definition by WHO (2003)

“The use of systematic research techniques for program decision making to achieve a specific outcome.”

“Any research producing practically usable knowledge (evidence, finding, information) which can improve program implementation (effectiveness, efficiency, quality, access, scale-up, sustainability) regardless the type of research (design, method, approach) falls within the boundaries of Operational Research.”
And for MSF?

WHAT IS OPERATIONAL RESEARCH?

The search for knowledge on interventions, strategies or tools that can improve the quality and performance of programs.

OPERATIONAL RESEARCH - WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL FOR MSF?
- To improve program performance in relation to medical care and prevention
- To assess the feasibility of new strategies or interventions in new settings or for particular groups
- To advocate for change in policy and practice
Quiz 2

How many papers are published every year by MSF OCB alone?

A. 1-2
B. 10-20
C. 100-150
And for MSF?
The OR process

1. Research Question/Concept Note
2. Protocol
3. Data Collection
4. Data Analysis & Report/Publication
5. Dissemination for Policy & Practice Change
OR in MSF TB/HIV projects

1. New tests and diagnostics
2. New drugs and clinical approaches
3. Prevention
4. Monitoring and evaluation
5. Models of care
How is OR done in MSF?

- From analysis of routine M&E to multisite randomized control trials
- Different levels: project, country, OC, inter-national/-sectional
- “Top-down”/”Down-top”
- Partners/support, epidemiologists and M&E coordinators (project, national, OC), OC research units, Epicentre, academic institutions & MoH
Ethical approval process

• MSF ERB ethics framework / guidelines*
• MSF ERB ethics application forms*
• 7 MSF ERB criteria for an exemption from MSF ERB review*
  – Full ethics review
  – Expedite ethics review
  – Exemption
• Do not forget the LOCAL ethics

Usually 6-8 weeks... Worry not...
Quiz 3

Who in the field is in charge of OR?

A. The epi
B. The PMR/Fieldco
C. The Medco
D. Nobody in the field
E. Everybody
How is OR done in MSF?

- OCP → Epicentre (+ field)
- OCA → field+ HQ + Manson Unit
- OCG → field+ HQ (+ Epicentre)
- OCBA → field+ HQ (+ Epicentre)
- OCB → field+ HQ (+ Epicentre)
  - HIV/TB/HCV → SAMU
  - Other topics → LuxOR
The OR process

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Quiz 3

What form(s) can qualitative research data take?

A. Numbers
B. Western blot lab test
C. Words
D. WhatsApp messages
E. Photos/pictures
F. Videos
How and when do we do qualitative research?

- Before implementing a project or intervention
- During a project
- At the end: evaluation

Stand alone qualitative research....

...or mixed methods
Examples of qualitative research

- Experiences of HIV stigma
- Adherence and retention challenges
- Acceptability of PrEP
- Understanding discordant couples
- Reasons for non-attendance of men at facilities
- Experiences of drug stockouts
- Barriers & motivations for joining adherence clubs
- Preferences for models of care
- Perceptions on oral testing
Example: PrEP in Beira, Mozambique

• Qualitative research was conducted to understand the experiences of sex-workers taking PrEP in Beira
  – Part of mixed methods study on PrEP in Tete and Beira

• In-depth interviews and focus group discussions carried out with female sex-workers and MSF staff

• Data shows:
  – Lack of knowledge of PrEP before being informed by MSF
  – Some misunderstandings about how PrEP worked
  – Some women stopped PrEP because of side-effects and travel
  – Appreciation for services and support received from MSF
The OR process

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The long walk from idea to implementation to policy change: the example of DR TB decentralization in SA

2007 idea -> 2011 report -> 2012 national policy -> 2014 publication

MULTI-DRUG RESISTANT TUBERCULOSIS

A POLICY FRAMEWORK ON DECENTRALISED AND DEINSTITUTIONALISED MANAGEMENT FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Scaling up diagnosis and treatment of drug-resistant tuberculosis in Khayelitsha, South Africa

An integrated, community-based approach, March 2015

Community-based treatment of drug-resistant tuberculosis in Khayelitsha, South Africa

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SUMMARY

Setting: Khayelitsha, South Africa, a peri-urban township with high burdens of tuberculosis (TB), multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.

Methods: This study was conducted from April 2013 to March 2014 with a prospective cohort of adult patients with smear-negative pulmonary TB referred to Khayelitsha Hospital for drug-resistant TB testing.

Results: Of 123 patients with smear-negative TB, 16 (13%) had positive cultures for MDR-TB. Patients with smear-negative TB were smear-negative for MDR-TB, and 13 (81%) were smear-negative for drug-susceptible TB.

Conclusion: Community-based treatment of drug-resistant TB in Khayelitsha is feasible and successful.
Case study for group work

You are working in CHK in Kinshasa. Over the last 6 months, you have noticed that an increasing number of adult patients are being admitted with advanced HIV disease. You have routine patient data and observations from the staff but you want to learn more

**Group 1:** Brainstorm and list a research agenda (max 4 studies) for CHK and then prioritise ONE project and justify your choice

**Group 2:** design a quantitative study to find out more...

**Group 3:** design a qualitative study to find out more...

**Group 4:** Your study is complete. Who will you share the results with? Make a plan for advocacy and action.
Group exercise

• Write answers on flipchart

• 20 minutes preparation then each group presents for 5 minutes

• 5 minutes questions per group
Research is a tool and a culture and not a skillset

Research should be integrated into programmes & field teams OWN the research projects

The aim of any OR is to improve the services we offer to patients and communities and to advocate for change
Some practical information and OR resources
OR Resources

- Repository: - http://fieldresearch.msf.org/msf/
- Journal articles & TOC: aline.raymond@brussels.msf.org
- MSF HIV domains & topics (to align OR & advocacy)*
- OR concept note template*
- OR protocol template*
- OR methodological support people (protocol development, data analysis, writing-up of results)
Welcome

MSF is known for its humanitarian medical work, but it has also produced important research based on its field experience. It has published articles in over 100 peer-reviewed journals and they have often changed clinical practice and been used for humanitarian advocacy. These articles are available for free, in full text - no login required. We sincerely thank the publishers for their permission to archive on this site.

Published Research and Commentary
Conference Abstracts
Programme Descriptions
Research Resources
Trainings and support

• SORT-IT courses: quantitative and qualitative and thematic

• Country-specific OR workshops (designed for specific needs)

• Ongoing mentoring and field support
SORT IT Courses (2009 – 2017)
Total: 53 courses with 579 participants from 87 countries

**Asia**

1. Singapore
2. China
3. Vietnam
4. Cambodia
5. Myanmar
6. Kazakhstan
7. Turkmenistan
8. Kyrgyzstan
9. Timor Leste
10. Indonesia
11. Malaysia

**South America**

1. Brazil
2. Peru
3. Mexico
4. El Salvador
5. Colombia
6. Dominican Republic
7. Guatemala
8. Honduras
9. Haiti

**Africa**

1. Kenya
2. South Africa
3. Ethiopia
4. Malawi
5. Zimbabwe
6. Benin
7. Somalia
8. Ghana
9. Tanzania
10. Namibia

**Europe**

1. Georgia
2. Armenia
3. Azerbaijan
4. Denmark
5. Italy
6. Switzerland
7. Greece
8. Serbia

**South Pacific**

1. New Caledonia
2. Cook Islands
3. Tonga
4. Marshall Islands
5. Federated States of Micronesia
6. Solomon Islands
7. Vanuatu
8. Fiji
9. American Samoa
10. Samoa
11. Guam
12. Kiribati
13. Palau

**Multi-Country**

1. Africa/Asia

**Total Courses (2009 – 2017)**

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**OR Resources/ Ethics /Contact persons**

- **Ask your epi/OR coordo/Medco/SAMU CFP**
- **Ethics accountable**: Medical Directors
- **OR advice/ Ethics focal points**
  - **OCB**: HIV/TB: CFPs/Petros/Emilie  
    Other subjects: LuxOR
  - **OCG**: Iza Ciglenecki
  - **OCP**: Brigitte Vasset
  - **OCA**: Sidney Wong/ Annick Lenglet
  - **OCBA**: Jean-Francois Saint-Saveur

**Research**

**Question**

**Protocol**

**Ethics review/approval**

**Moving on...**
• MSF supports evidence generation through OR in almost every project to inform policy and practice.

• OR should be embedded in the projects.

• Resources are available to support OR at different levels.