



Innovator Spotlight: Adam Lewis

Director, Communications & Marketing
Gradian Health Systems



Q: What does Gradian Health Systems do, and what is your role?

A: Gradian is a nonprofit medical technology company that works to transform the impact of medical equipment in low-resource hospitals around the world. Our model is rooted in three main pillars:

1. **Technology:** We make world-class devices that meet international quality standards and have features designed specifically for low-resource settings.
2. **Training:** We provide on-site user training every time we install a product, including simulation scenarios and proctored cases.
3. **Customer Service:** Our distribution network of local companies, entrepreneurs, and technicians allows us to provide reliable after-sales support for all our users and customers.

I lead communications and programs for Gradian. Certain cadres of health providers in sub-Saharan Africa require skilled training and mentorship beyond what we can offer in a one-time user training, so it's imperative that we partner with governments, training institutions, donors, and local NGOs to help build the capacity of under-resourced health systems. I manage this programmatic work in countries like Zambia and Tanzania, where we have comprehensive skills strengthening projects underway for both health providers using our technology and biomedical technicians maintaining it. I also manage our organizational communications across nearly 25 national markets.

Q: How have you and your team worked with USAID, particularly through Saving Lives at Birth?

A: While US Missions have funded the procurement of Gradian's equipment for several years—as a direct customer in Zambia and a project donor in Ethiopia and Guinea—it wasn't until last year that we began a more formal engagement with USAID. In July 2017, we won a *Saving Lives at Birth* Transition to Scale grant for a project to strengthen emergency childbirth care in Zambia, which we have been implementing with our local partners ever since.

The project is centered around our Universal Anaesthesia Machine (UAM)—the world's only internationally-certified anesthesia machine that can generate its own medical oxygen and work without electricity. Having already contributed to thousands of safer surgeries in Zambia and nearly 20 other African countries, the UAM is a proven source of anesthesia for surgery in hospitals facing unreliable power and oxygen, such as those in rural districts of Zambia. Our project is equipping 32 hospitals with the UAM and providing specialized capacity building opportunities for all anesthesia providers, including a mobile, simulation-based course pioneered by our partners at the Society of Anesthesiologists of Zambia (SAZ) and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. We are also working with Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET), the Churches Health Association of Zambia (CHAZ), and the Ministry of Health to train local biomedical technicians on our equipment and nearly 10 other devices needed for safe childbirth.



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care. Our goal is to commercialize and scale this program throughout the country, relying on our colleagues at Sonergy Diagnostics—our distribution partner since 2013—for ongoing customer service and marketing. We also won this year’s Pitch Competition at the *Saving Lives at Birth* DevelopmentXchange, for which we presented our plans to scale up a new, user-centered training model in parallel with the burgeoning demand for our products in East Africa.

Q: What makes you passionate about your work?

A: I have always cared about global health, but my feelings tended to live on an abstract level: I was motivated by the mission to improve healthcare in underserved communities, yet I was physically and intellectually removed from that world. Issues I cared about—such as child health or reproductive rights—existed to me as only words on a page, faces on a screen, voices on a podcast. The ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of my work were enough to motivate me; but I needed to connect more directly with the ‘who’ and the ‘how’ to fuel a true passion.

My experience at Gradian has afforded me the luxury of pursuing that passion by getting closer to the work and implementing it through a sustainable model to which I wholeheartedly subscribe. I get to work hand-in-hand with some of the world’s true heroes—frontline clinicians and technicians who work tirelessly to make care possible in settings where it should be impossible. And I get to do it through a market- and mission-based lens: with Gradian’s hybrid business model, we sell our products as close to cost as we can, using our sales revenue to finance our manufacturing, shipping, R&D and in-country distribution. We then leverage donor funds to cover our costs for training, overhead, and a best-in-class service warranty. This combination of people, process, and proximity has redefined my passion for global health and allowed me to cultivate it more and more every day—a rare privilege I try not to take lightly.

Q: What topic(s) in global health interest(s) you the most and why?

A: The global health topic that most interests me technically doesn’t fall in the traditional global health space. I am interested in investments that can generate the most returns for global health, and I believe girls education is at the top of the list. To the extent that there is a global health “magic bullet”, I believe it’s ensuring that every girl in every community of every country has access to primary school and the surrounding forces to keep them in school at least until university.

If girls are able to attend school from age 5-18—and societies are able to foster an environment in which they are valued for doing so—health systems will be far better positioned to care for women, and women will be far better positioned to care for themselves and their families. When girls attend school, they are less likely to be married off or impregnated as a teenager, lowering the prevalence of risky pregnancies and sexual violence. When girls attend school, there is a natural institution at which to administer preventive measures like vaccines and contraceptives, offer a (more) sanitary space for day-to-day hygiene, and provide food and clean water to combat malnutrition. When girls attend school, they develop skills that apply directly to the workforce, empowering themselves on a path toward financial independence, their family on a path toward healthier outcomes, and their community on a path toward economic development.

Favorite Quote:

“Why you, and not me?”

This simple question is from a whole book of favorite quotes, which was just released by the Center for Global Development this summer: *From Day One: Why Supporting Girls Aged 0 to 10 Is Critical to Change Africa’s Path*. The book was written by Her Excellency Dr. Joyce Banda, the former President of Malawi, whose work on behalf of girls and women goes unmatched in my eyes.