

# INTEGRATED HIV/HTN NEWSLETTER

LEVERAGING THE HIV PLATFORM FOR HYPERTENSION CONTROL IN UGANDA.

## Remarks from the Principal Investigator, PI

MS. JANE KABAMI

It is my pleasure to invite you to our second edition of the Integrated HIV/HTN Project newsletter. The main goal of this project is to optimize health outcomes for HIV clients/patients focusing on reducing co-occurring hypertension related morbidity and improving the health care delivery and management systems for both.

The team is excited to share progress and achievements with you. We are already implementing activities for the third year of the project as we near the end of the year. I do appreciate and commend the project implementing team, the health workforce at the health facilities where we work and not forgetting our partners; Uganda Heart Institute (UHI), Makerere University, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and the Ministry of health of Uganda (MoH) for their invaluable and relentless support during the implementation of this project.

We aspire to maintain the perfect collaboration with our policymakers in the Ministry of Health so that Uganda can use our evidence to influence practice thereby improving our healthcare systems to achieve better healthcare outcomes. We hope that this newsletter will provide you with useful information and insight into the research project progress and to foster our continuous engagement with you in meaningful ways as our valued stakeholders. We hope that you find it useful and informative.

We remain grateful to our funder, The European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) for making this project possible.

Finally, I thank you once again for your continuous support.

I wish you a joyous holiday season filled with peace, love, and cheer. Best wishes for a wonderful Christmas and a happy New Year!

## Covered in this newsletter

- Remarks from the Principal Investigator
- Project updates
- COVID-19 Updates
- Ebola Updates
- Upcoming events

# Project updates

## Support supervision and facility review meetings



**Photo:** Ms. Elizabeth Arinitwe, the Training Coordinator from Uganda Heart Institute supports a health worker to review the patient register, during one of the routine support supervision exercises.

Staff from UHI and IDRC continue to make frequent visits to the health facilities and during this time, the project team reviews the patient charts of identified patients who are having both HIV and HTN.

During the review, some project team members check if the patients have attained blood pressure control and if the blood pressure has not yet been controlled to a normal range, a care plan is drawn for each patient depending on what the challenge could be.

Part of the care plan is to increase the frequency of some of the HTN medication, stepping up dosage and counselling patients about drug adherence.

The project team also gives feedback to the health workers on what is found in the files. During this time, the health workers also share the progress and challenges that they face while implementing the study and suggest possible way forward.

The project team also delivers supplies like anti - hypertension drugs, batteries for BP machines and patient stickers. The patient stickers are placed on patient files for easy identification. ■

## Training and capacity building

Training and capacity building is one of the components of WP3 and we have trained 24 peer educators from the health facilities on how to measure and record patients' blood pressure using digital blood pressure machines.

These were trained together with 25 health workers for their facilities. The training was held on 29th April 2022. The peer educators continue to support the health facilities in measuring patients' blood pressure during the ART clinic days along other measurements like weight, height and MUAC.



**Photo:** One of the project team members reviewing the patient blue card as part of supporting patient data documentation at a local health facility in South Western Uganda.

## Coaching and Mentorship

Teams from UHI and IDRC held mentorship sessions for the staff in the health facilities where different topics were discussed. Some of the discussed topics included screening patients for hypertension (HTN), management of hypertension using lifestyle changes and dietary modification, management of HTN using drugs, dosage, frequency and how to monitor patients. Emphasis was made about integration of the HTN services into the HIV care.

## The Makerere University Implementation Science (IMS) Training in March 2022.



**Photo:** District health teams pose for a photo after attending the Makerere University implementation science training.

The integrated HIV/HTN Makerere IMS training was a three-day workshop attended by district health teams from thirteen intervention districts involved in the implementation of the Integrated HIV/HTN Project. The primary goal of the training was to introduce trainees to concepts of implementation science and to interest them in the available opportunities for capacity building in implementation science within the Integrated HIV/HTN trial, specifically the Fundamentals of Implementation Science Course.

The training sessions were led by the Principal Investigator, Ms. Jane Kabami and the Training Coordinator from Makerere University, Ms. Joan Nangendo. They conducted the physical facilitation session in which trainees went through a mid-term evaluation of what they had learned from their training, which was led by Dr. Mucunguzi Atukunda, the Project Manager, with virtual help from Dr. Martin Mudu. In addition, the training helped trainees appreciate the work that they do as part of the Integrated HIV/HTN study by educating them on what implementation science is and how it is done.

"The best part of the training for me was the presentation on implementation science and its principles, which I attended for the second time because the first one I attended was when randomization was being done. I would be interested in returning for more training." Mr. Mugabi Paffura, a trainee, said.

According to Mr. Mugabi. The training was well attended, with over eighty members in attendance, and many expressed interest in taking advantage of the opportunities for capacity building in implementation science.

"We are looking forward to the trainees enrolling in the next intake of the Fundamentals of Implementation Science course, which is facilitated by the integrated HIV/HTN project with funding from [EDCTP](#). We hope that a number of them will participate in the Makerere University monthly journal clubs to discuss implementation science." Joan Nangendo, the Training Coordinator from Makerere University said. ■

## The Integrated HIV/HTN Annual Consortium meeting 2022.

The Integrated HIV/HTN Annual Consortium meeting was attended by the integrated project's partners, who gathered to assess the previous year's activities and prepare for the next year.

This meeting contributes to the development of a coherent and structured approach to the anticipated integrated HIV/HTN activities for the next year.

This was the third annual consortium meeting, that took place in the first month of the third year at the IDRC Nakasero office. The meeting focused on consortium governance and resolving the primary concerns that consortium members were facing.

IDRC, Makerere University, Uganda Heart Institute, and the Uganda Ministry of health are among the consortium participants of the Integrated HIV/HTN Project. During the meeting, each partner provided an update to the consortium on the actions completed in year 2.

"In general, Makerere has done well. Our budget has been adequate. We adapted by using virtual means for our trainings during the COVID-19 season. In general, we feel privileged to be part of this consortium meeting. We have achieved a lot and we want to achieve more in the coming year." Said Ms. Joan Nangendo, the Training Coordinator at Makerere University.

On behalf of Makerere University, Professor Moses Kamywa stated that members were able to come up with some significant resolutions for year 3 and address a few difficulties as they prepared for year 3. ■

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Joan Nangendo  
Training Coordinator  
Makerere University

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**Photo:** Some of the consortium members pose for a photo at the meeting.



## The Integrated HIV/HTN Dinner

Some businesses go to great lengths to foster teamwork among their employees. For example, IDRC hosted a dinner for the Integrated HIV/HTN Project team at Pardis Restaurant in Kampala on 15th March 2022.

It was a memorable night filled with laughter, fun, and delicious food for the entire team to enjoy. The dinner was a way for the Integrated HIV/HTN Project partners to express gratitude to the team for their contributions to the project.

The dinner provided opportunities for teammates to bond. Team members socialized and had a good time together. This token of appreciation made the team feel valued and motivated.

Photo: The project team share a moment at the dinner.

## LSHTM donates FFP2 Masks to the Integrated HIV/HTN Study

Twenty six selected health facilities received a generous donation of FFP2 masks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local health facilities received both mild and severe COVID-19 patients and health workers were tasked to give treatment to the patients. Such was the risk that health workers were exposed to.

Some of the health workers contracted the COVID-19 virus while others succumbed to the same. The integrated HIV/HTN team was sensitive to the risk and continued to provide PPEs to the health worker teams. This effort was greatly boosted by the generous donation from LSHTM.

This was in addition to the KN95 and surgical masks that were supplied by the government.

Dr. Brian Twinamatsiko, the project Medical Officer handed over the FFP2 masks and educated the health teams on how to use the masks effectively.

"The masks are strong and durable. They can be sanitized and reused. These can be given to high-risk staff." Said Dr. Brian.

"Thank you very much for thinking about our safety. The masks have come at the right time." said Sister Nagyemba Macklean, an Enrolled Nurse at Kamuganguzi Health Centre III.



Photo: Dr. Brian Twinamatsiko hands over the FFP2 masks one of the health facility teams.



**Thank you very much for thinking about our safety. The masks have come at the right time.**

Sister Nagyemba Macklean Enrolled Nurse  
Kamuganguzi Health Centre III

# UCSF donates Pulse oximeters to the Integrated HIV/HTN Study



A pulse oximeter is a device that is usually placed on a fingertip. It uses light beams to estimate the oxygen saturation of the blood and the pulse rate. Oxygen saturation gives information about the amount of oxygen carried in the blood. The pulse oximeter can estimate the amount of oxygen in the blood without having to draw a blood sample.

<https://www.fda.gov/>

Photo: Ms. Elizabeth Arinitwe tests the oximeter on Sister Fausta Tumutangirire a registered nurse at Mparo Health Centre IV.

"We are grateful. Thank you. We had only one oximeter which was mostly used in the theatre. Now we can give our patients some kind of improved care with an extra oximeter." says Sister Fausta Tumutangirire, a Registered Nurse at Mparo Health facility in Kabale.

Mparo Health facility is one of the 26 health facilities that received a donation of pulse oximeters from the University of California San Francisco, UCSF, as a way of supporting the Integrated HIV/HTN Project health teams to be able to treat patients with an extra hand of care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Oximeters were useful in giving care and treatment for COVID-19 patients in the selected health facilities that received the donation.

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Sister Fausta Tumutangirire Registered Nurse at Mparo Health Centre IV, Kabale.

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## COVID-19 Update

Uganda is now registering very low cases of COVID-19. The project team continues to follow Ministry of Health guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) during activity implementation. Safety measures taken include; providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to project teams, observing the Ministry of Health guidelines and sharing updates of COVID-19 regularly.

## Ebola Update

The Ebola Virus Disease infections have greatly reduced as compared to when the outbreak was first announced. The Uganda Ministry of Health has put in place safety and treatment measures for people that have been in contact with the virus. A new Ebola treatment Unit has been set up and 1,200 doses to be used in the Ebola vaccine trial have been received from WHO. The government of Uganda has enforced SOPs for the population to follow and stay safe from the deadly virus. Project teams continue to be vigilant by following the SOPs put in place.

## Upcoming Events

The Integrated HIV/HTN project will hold a stakeholder meeting in the last quarter of the year, in Mbarara district, bringing together District Health Officers (DHOs), Implementing partners and HIV/NCD Focal Persons from 26 districts to discuss project progress and lessons learned so far.

# Highlights on progress

## Towards Hypertension Control in Uganda

6

Implementation Science Journal clubs conducted.

52

Health facilities supported with HTN drugs.

26

Health facilities supported with at least 2 mentorship sessions.

26

Health facilities supported with FFP2 masks.

31

Trainees enrolled for the Fundamentals of Implementation Science course at the University of Washington.

26

Health facilities supported with oximeters.

52

Health facilities supported with blood pressure machines.

52

Health facilities supported with Health Management Information System (HMIS) tools from MOH.



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