



WELCOME NOTE FROM CeSSRA OFFICE

Welcome to the Second Newsletter from the Center for Social Science Research on AIDS (CeSSRA), a training and research center, with collaborators from Case Western Reserve University, Makerere University, the Joint Clinical Research Centre, and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. The CeSSRA office is always open from Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm. It is located in Seminar Room 7 in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Makerere University main campus.

The center's aim is to train social scientists to carry out research on HIV/AIDS and to conduct a longitudinal study on the social context of HIV/AIDS treatment. And under the fellowship component, the Fellows are undergoing initial preparatory training and will soon be introduced to a series of modules like AIDS 201, and Anthropological Research Design using interactive web-based and classroom learning. Fellows are also receiving free-critique as they present their research work and this will thus put them in a better position to publish their work in scientific journals and also write fundable proposals.

PUBLIC LECTURE:

The center has organized a public talk entitled "**Understanding the Links between Alcohol and HIV**" to be presented by Dr. Ajay Sethi from the department of Population and Health Sciences, University of Wisconsin. The talk will take place on **6th August 2008 in LR2 Faculty of Social Sciences-MUK from 1:00-2:00pm**. All are welcome!

This presentation is also part of the fellows' training as a module of the AIDS 201 Series.

RECENT EVENTS:

Fellows Monthly Meetings:

First Meeting: The first meeting took place on 29th June and Dr. David Mafigiri gave a Presentation on *Barriers to HIV/AIDS Treatment among Women in Kampala, Uganda*. A summary of his presentation is below:

This study identified barriers that HIV infected women receiving care at JCRC in Kampala, Uganda encounter in accessing care and developed recommendations to make available HIV care accessible. One hundred one HIV infected women taking ARVs discussed their experiences seeking and adhering to treatment. Women's narratives revealed significant barriers to initiating care at two stages: 1) delays in accessing voluntary counseling and testing (VCT); 2) even after

knowing their HIV positive status they faced delays in initiating treatment.

For many women, there were lengthy periods of delay between suspecting they had HIV, seeking testing, and beginning treatment. After making the decision to test for and learning of HIV infection, some continued to deny their status or have difficulty making decisions about seeking treatment. They still did not receive the full benefits of ARVs because of inability to initiate early VCT, and access to treatment. Women's needs go beyond economic cost of drugs, to include non-material social factors like social support to enhance disclosure. Women feared disclosing their HIV+ status to social network members, unless forced by circumstances (i.e., symptoms) because of fearing to disrupt their social support systems. Despite these problems women noted the importance of knowing one's HIV status, citing the benefits of entering treatment early. Efforts aimed at scaling up access to ARVs must recognize that HIV treatment has had far reaching impacts on families and communities. Access to care must be considered from a long term perspective, starting with the stage of initiating counseling and testing, and throughout treatment.

In this meeting, fellows also received their individual mentoring plans from Dr. McGrath, to start thinking through their research interests. Monthly fellows meetings are to be held on the last Friday of every month. It is proposed that during these monthly presentations, individual fellows will receive free critique from their colleagues to potentially prepare them to write publishable articles/ papers in scientific journals.



One of the Fellows monthly meetings

Second meeting: On 18th July 2008, CeSSRA fellow Nyirandikumwami Ruth presented a paper entitled "*Women's Access and Utilization of Antiretroviral Drugs in Uganda: A case of TASO Mulago and Nsambya Home Care.*" A summary of her presentation is below:

This study identified socio-economic and cultural obstacles that prevent women from accessing ARVs at TASO outreaches and Nsambya Home Care in Uganda and suggested ways of improving it. The study included 128 women, 64 of whom were receiving antiretroviral (ARV) medication and 64 women on treatment for opportunistic infections. Women revealed that despite the availability ARVs at a free cost, other obstacles limited their use: poverty, stigma and violence. Most of the women were widows with more than four children, no

property, and were unemployed. These factors had a negative impact on accessing and utilizing ARVs.

Even women who chose to disclose their HIV status feared potential repercussions, including: fear of harm to their relatives, domestic violence, and abandonment by their spouses who provide social support, as well as fear to be isolated from society. Other barriers included: lack of knowledge of the available services at given centers and costs in carrying out CD4 count, liver and kidney tests, transport, and social support.

Women acknowledged the importance of ARVs in improving people's lives but noted that there was a need to put in place mechanisms to reduce the obstacles so as to increase access and utilization of ARVs

Update from the Longitudinal Study:

As an update from the Research Component, the study instruments are ready and awaiting final approval by the UNCST and MUST IRB. Approvals from JCRC and Cleveland were received in June 2008. Two research assistants will be recruited to work with their two colleagues in data collection and data entry exercise.

CeSSRA Resource Center:

CeSSRA has established a resource center and has received reading materials from research work previously done by the fellows and also from other Institutions like UNAIDS. The center welcomes all those with hard and soft copy reading materials in order to equip the Resource Center for the benefit of all research users. The center is open to students, researchers and others.

Training Workshops at IDI and USHS:

From 24th to 30th June, some of the CeSSRA fellows and staff attended a training workshop organized by the Social and Behavioral HIV Research Capacity Building Project (SABRES)/ IDI. One of the objectives of the workshop was to understand the model of improving health care delivery and also how basic principles of health economics apply to delivery of health care services. The facilitators were Dr. Shan Cretin and Emmett Keeler from Rand Cooperation.

Fellows and staff also had the opportunity to attend a workshop on data analysis organized by Uganda Society for Health Scientists (USHS) in Mulago. The main objective of the workshop was to equip participants with hands-on experience in quantitative and qualitative data analysis tools.

The reports and reading materials from these two workshops are available at the center.

PROFILE

This month we are featuring an academic profile of one of our research fellows, **Nyirandikumwami Ruth**. Other fellows will also be introduced in the subsequent newsletters.



Nyirandikumwami M. Ruth, MA Sociology MUK

Ruth Nyirandikumwami holds a bachelor's degree in social sciences and Master of Arts (sociology) both attained from Makerere University Kampala.

Ruth holds a post graduate certificate in research methods and report writing skills, and has received training in basic principles of decentralization, and information technology, among others. She has had extensive research experience, through which she has performed the roles of facilitator, data collector, research assistant and a principle investigator.

Ruth has attended several workshops, conferences both local and international, and seminars related to HIV/AIDS research studies. Earlier this year she presented a paper in Benin entitled "*Women's Access and Utilization of Antiretroviral Drugs in Uganda: A case of TASO Mulago and Nsambya Home Care.*" This research is based on Ruth's thesis for completion of her master's degree and is the same that she shared with the other CeSSRA fellows at this month's meeting.

She is currently working as a secretary in the Department of Sociology Makerere University and has also worked as a project administrative assistant in the same department. As a CeSSRA research fellow, Ruth hopes to gain more experience in the field of Research and also benefit from the Mentoring plan that the center is running.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Presentation in the next Monthly meeting

Mr. George Kitatta will present a paper entitled "*Effects of AIDS on families: A case study of Child-headed households in Rakai District*, in our next fellows meeting on the 29th August 2008 in CeSSRA Office at 5pm. All fellows are encouraged to attend.

Other Workshops:

The Center has organized web-based and classroom sessions for its Fellows starting in September 2008 starting with Research Design and Methodology. These will be interactive sessions and details about the schedule and venue will be communicated to you soon! The key facilitators will include Dr. McGrath, Prof. Rwabukwali, and Dr. Kaawa-Mafigiri.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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