

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

1 FEBRUARY 2024



## Welcome back!

*Happy New Year! We hope you had a rejuvenating festive season, filled with cherished moments spent with friends and family. We are positively brimming with anticipation for the incredible opportunities that lie ahead... Here's to a successful and fulfilling year!*

## UPDATES

### PROMISE team convenes in Victoria Falls

Exciting News! In the week of January 22nd, a productive meeting was held at Victoria Falls to discuss the PROMISE clinical trial. The trial is planned to be submitted to MRC Applied Global Health Research. We had the privilege of having Anna Machiha from the Ministry of Health and Childcare (MOHCC) and Dr Francis J Ndowa, advisor to MOHCC, in attendance. Progress is underway!

### Catching up with Neotree!

We had the privilege of hosting Prof Michelle Heys, the Principal Investigator of the Neotree study, and Sophie Sutcliffe Goodman during the week of January 22nd. Prof Heys, a distinguished researcher at University College London and the National Institute for Health and Care Research, focuses on improving health outcomes for children in low-resource settings. Sophie Sutcliffe Goodman, the Director of Neotree, brings valuable experience in advocacy and management. They conducted an insightful seminar on the development of the Neotree project, a digital health intervention aimed at improving care for small and sick newborns in resource-limited settings. The Neotree team also conducted field visits to Sally Mugabe Central Hospital and Chinhoyi Central District Hospital. To celebrate their progress, a special dinner was organized at 3 Monkeys restaurant, attended by partners and stakeholders. We are delighted to welcome Faith Rutendo Kandiye to the Neotree team as the qualitative research and public engagement coordinator.



Neotree site visits and dinner event

## Dr Horobin visits THRU ZIM

Experienced physiotherapist, Dr Hazel Horobin from Brighton University, visited THRU ZIM as the supervisor of Kate Mattick, who is starting her CREATE PhD fellowship within the KOSHESAI study. Dr Horobin met the team to learn more about the KOSHESAI study, which aims to develop an evidence-based framework for managing chronic disorders in older individuals. This initiative, part of a Healthy Ageing Research Programme in Sub-Saharan Africa, seeks to improve the health and well-being of older people in Zimbabwe.

## CREATE fellows convene in Zambia

During the week of January 16th, the CREATE PhD Programme Fellows Meeting 2024 took place in Lusaka, Zambia. The primary objective of the meeting was to provide fellows with an opportunity to showcase their research findings and foster connections among CREATE fellows and their supervisors. The event featured dedicated sessions on various topics such as community engagement, the future of global health, the expectations of policy makers regarding research, LGBTQ rights, and the decarbonization of global health. Prominent individuals in attendance from THRU ZIM included Prof Katharina Kranzer, Prof Rashida Ferrand, Dr Kevin Martin, Prof Celia Gregson, Tinashe Mwatutura, Maureen Tshuma, Rumbi Gumbie, Dr Rudo Chingono, Dr Claire Calderwood, Dr Mandi Tembo, Kate Mattick, Lydia Davidson, Dr Sam Gnanapragasam, Dr Chido Dziva Chikwari, and Dr Constance Mackworth-Young.



*CREATE fellows and supervisors in Zambia*

## THRU ZIM excels in showcasing research to experts

From January 12th-15th, Prof Caroline Relton, Pro-Director of Research at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Prof George Davey Smith from the University of Bristol, known for his leadership and support of the MRC Integrative Epidemiology Unit, visited THRU ZIM. Their visit held strategic importance for us as it aimed to strengthen and consolidate future international collaborations and partnerships.

During their stay, our esteemed guests had the opportunity to witness and experience the brilliant research conducted at THRU ZIM. They embarked on a series of field visits to our studies at Sally Mugabe Hospital, specifically the Fractures E3 and Erase-TB study sites, as well as the Zvitambo Laboratories. Additionally, they attended a special THRU ZIM research seminar where Prof Katharina Kranzer and Prof Rashida Ferrand presented on our rich capacity-building initiatives and provided insights into the history and organizational structure of our research unit. Our dedicated postdoctoral researchers and PhD students showcased our research themes in sexual and reproductive health & adolescent health, TB and infections, multimorbidity, musculoskeletal health, and public engagement during the seminar. The guests also had the opportunity to tour our offices and meet with Dr Shungu Munyati, Director-General of Biomedical Research and Training Institute. In addition to the professional engagements, we made sure to show our guests a good time. They were treated to delightful dinners and lunches at Victoria 22 and Veldemeers, adding a touch of colour to their visit. Our guests expressed their appreciation for the nature of our research and the efficiency of our operations. We take great pride in successfully showcasing the strengths and qualities of THRU ZIM. We eagerly look forward to hosting Prof Caroline Relton and Prof George Davey Smith again in the future, and we are excited to cultivate a beneficial collaboration with them. Their visit has laid the foundation for fruitful partnerships, and we are enthusiastic about the possibilities that lie ahead.



Prof Katharina Kranzer

## Prof Katharina Kranzer awarded the EDCPT SOFAR Grant

We are thrilled to announce that Prof. Katharina Kranzer has been awarded the EDCPT SOFAR Grant! EDCPT 3 has granted 5 million Euros to a fellowship network project coordinated by Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich (LMU), with Prof. Kranzer as the Principal Investigator. This collaborative effort involves three African institutions: the Biomedical Research and Training Institute/THRU ZIM as the scientific lead, Zambart in Zambia, and Instituto Nacional de Saúde in Mozambique. Additionally, two European institutions, LMU and LSHTM, are also part of the project, with Prof. Rashida Ferrand as the PI. The project aims to train African early career researchers, focusing on 5 postdoctoral researchers, 6 PhD students, and 4 MSc students. The grant will commence in the second quarter of 2024 and contribute to the development of the Southern Africa Research Capacity Network (SOFAR).

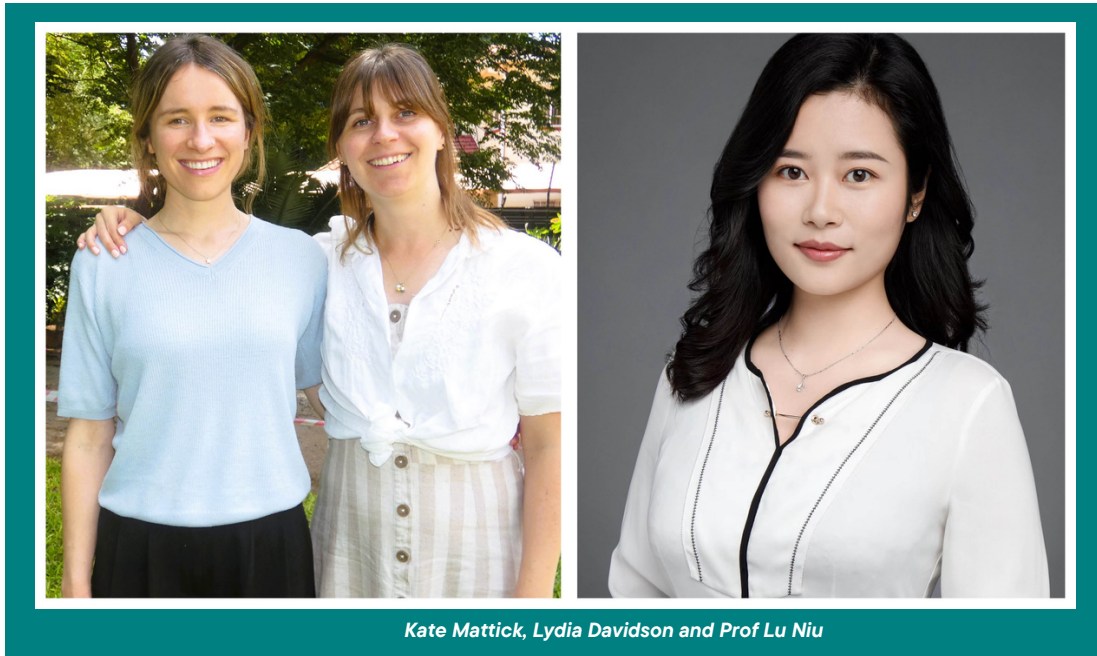
## Welcome academics!

We are pleased to extend a warm welcome to our two new PhD students, Kate Mattick and Lydia Davidson and Associate Professor at Xiangya School of Public Health, Lu Niu. Recently, we had the opportunity to sit down with them and gain some insights into their research and aspirations. Let's hear what they had to say:

*"I am a CREATE PhD fellow, registered at Brighton and Sussex Medical School. My clinical background is as a Physiotherapist, where I have experienced working in the UK, Malawi and Bangladesh with a variety of patient presentations. I have developed a particular interest in frailty and healthy ageing and more broadly, access to rehabilitation and assistive devices. My research is centred on co-developing community rehabilitation services to promote functional ability and quality of life of older people. I will be using a mixed methods approach including Photovoice to identify the health priorities of older adults and process evaluation tools to measure the impact of interventions. While at THRU-ZIM I am excited to be working with the KOSHESAI team, who are leading a 5-year programme with the overall aim of developing and implementing an evidence-based clinical framework for non-specialist assessment and management of chronic disorders of ageing. The results will help inform new models of care for healthy ageing that are low cost and scalable." – Kate Mattick*

*"I am a CREATE PhD fellow, registered at London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. I am a paediatric nurse by background and have experience in leading nursing and quality improvement teams in paediatric and neonatal care in the UK, Afghanistan and Myanmar. I completed my nursing training at King's College, London and hold an MSc in Public Health for Development from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. My aim is to contribute towards reducing neonatal mortality by utilising a nursing perspective of the key issues impacting neonatal mortality and morbidity, including neonatal sepsis. My research will work closely with staff and families to investigate how a participatory approach may improve care and ensure sustainability of infection prevention and control in low-resource neonatal units. Parents frequently provide hands on care for newborns in neonatal units but are rarely involved in the design or delivery of interventions. This study will explore whether involving staff and families closely in intervention development improves feasibility, sustainability and uptake of the intervention and if the co-design approach could be used to tackle other complex issues within the neonatal unit." – Lydia Davidson*

*"My name is Prof Lu Niu, and I am an Associate Professor at Xiangya School of Public Health, Central South University in China. I am also a fellow of the CMB-LSHTM Global Health Leadership Training Programme, and I am conducting nine months of fieldwork in Zimbabwe. My academic background spans nursing, public health, and mental health. My primary research focus is on mental health and suicide prevention among adolescents and young adults. In addition, I have participated in several projects in global health, including patient safety and healthcare systems in Western Africa. While at THRU ZIM, I am excited to be working with Dr. Constance Mackworth-Young and Dr. Chido Dziva Chikwari." – Prof Lu Niu*



*Kate Mattick, Lydia Davidson and Prof Lu Niu*

### **Early Career Researchers Club finds new home at UZ**

We are thrilled to announce the establishment of a new collaboration between the University of Zimbabwe (UZ), now known as the University of Zimbabwe Higher Degrees Innovation and Industrialisation Series (HDII), and the Early Career Researchers' Club (ECR). The collaboration was officially inaugurated by Dr. Shungu Munyati and Prof. Francis Machingura (UZ) at the inaugural seminar on January 17th. During the event, they highlighted the primary objectives of the HDII/ECR club, which aims to facilitate knowledge sharing, education, and the exchange of ideas on various research areas and topics of interest. As the collaboration finds its new home at the UZ, we held our first seminar of the year at the Centre for Postgraduate Studies. The seminar featured two exceptional researchers from THRU ZIM, Dr. Justin Dixon and Dr. Felicity Fitzgerald. Dr. Dixon delivered a thought-provoking presentation titled "Assembling the 'Whole System' Challenge of Multimorbidity: Insights from the KnowM Study," sharing key findings from the KnowM study conducted in Zimbabwe. He emphasized the importance of qualitative and co-productive research in addressing complex health challenges. On the other hand, Dr. Fitzgerald presented "Rethinking Neonatal Sepsis in Southern Africa," shedding light on the Neotree project and its focus on developing a digital quality improvement tool to enhance newborn outcomes. The seminar witnessed resounding success, with 38 attendees present in person and an additional 90 participants joining virtually. We are delighted by the turnout and the engagement from the audience. The positive response has further fuelled our excitement for the upcoming sessions. Stay tuned for more!



*HDII/ECR club members at the Centre of Postgraduate Studies (UZ)*

## Dr Mandi Tembo joins the BMC Public Health Editorial Board

Many congratulations to Dr Mandi Tembo on joining the BMC Public Health Editorial Board! BMC Public Health is an open access, peer-reviewed journal that considers articles on the epidemiology of disease and the understanding of all aspects of public health. The journal has a special focus on the social determinants of health, the environmental, behavioural, and occupational correlates of health and disease, and the impact of health policies, practices and interventions on the community.



## 5 MINUTES WITH...

### Rumbi Gumbie

#### What do you do and when did you start?

I am a CREATE PhD Clinical Research Fellow from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. My project, TSIME: Integrating Sexual and Reproductive Health into Clinic-based HIV Services using evidence-based co-design in Zimbabwe, will be hosted at THRU ZIM for 2 years. I officially started at THRU-Zim in June 2023, although I began my PhD in London in September 2022.

#### Where can we find you in the office?

You can find me in the field management office, usually alongside Ethel, Kevin, and Mufaro on most days. Specifically, I sit in the far corner next to Kevin. However, I also find great enjoyment in working in the garden, surrounded by nature. If you're looking for me then, you will likely find me on the benches behind the stores.

#### What do you enjoy about your work?

What I love the most about my work is interacting with my peers. I would describe myself as an intro-extrovert—someone who is very social but also needs some time alone to recharge. Therefore, there may be a day or two when I keep mostly to myself. Additionally, I find great satisfaction in being in clinical settings. I am particularly excited about the next phase of my work, which involves working directly with healthcare professionals to conduct qualitative research on their experiences delivering HIV services in clinics. As someone who enjoys clinical teaching, I am eagerly looking forward to setting up workshops to facilitate learning and gain insights into the healthcare system in Zimbabwe.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are pleased to announce an upcoming Social Science Research Group seminar that you won't want to miss. On February 14th, 2024 at 11am, Nyasha Buwu will be presenting a captivating seminar. While the title is yet to be confirmed, we can assure you it will be an insightful and thought-provoking session. Mark your calendars and join us for this upcoming seminar.



# PUBLICATIONS

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- Mupambireyi Z, Cowan FM, Chappell E, Chimwaza A, Manika N, et al. (2024) "Getting pregnant during COVID-19 was a big risk because getting help from the clinic was not easy": COVID-19 experiences of women and healthcare providers in Harare, Zimbabwe. *PLOS Global Public Health* 4(1): e0002317. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0002317>
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# OPPORTUNITIES

## **Call for applications - MSc Sexual & Reproductive Health Policy and Programming**

We are thrilled to announce the ongoing recruitment for the online MSc in Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy and Programming, a collaborative effort between LSHTM and the University of Ghana School of Public Health. Applications are now open for the 2024/25 academic year, and we are delighted to offer 50 scholarships to eligible candidates. For detailed information on eligibility, fees, and the application process, please refer to the attached program flyers and visit the MSc programme page at the following link:

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/study/courses/masters-degrees/sexual-reproductive-health-policy-programming#overview>

The deadline for scholarship applications is March 1st, 2024, while fee-paying candidates have until September 1st, 2024, to apply.

We kindly request your support in sharing the programme flyers and spreading the word about this exciting opportunity within your networks. If you or potential applicants have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at [mcsrhpp@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:mcsrhpp@lshtm.ac.uk).

## **MRC funding opportunity for African researchers**

The Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) are pleased to announce an open funding opportunity. This grant aims to support exceptional early to mid-career African researchers in conducting outstanding global health research across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The funding supports researchers in partnership with UK-based institutions and enthusiastic local research environments. The programme aims to attract and retain talented 'rising star' individuals who will lead high-quality research on key global health issues relevant to SSA. Awards, providing support for up to five years, range from £250,000 to £750,000. Applications are open from January 24th to 24 April 24th, 2024.

Please visit this link for more information: <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/african-research-leaders/>

## **Call for submissions - Inclusive Menstruation: Practice, Research, Action Conference**

Wednesday, May 29th, 2024, Liverpool John Moores University, UK

Menstruation Research has continued to grow since the establishment of The Menstruation Research Network UK (MRN) in 2018. We have seen shifts in policy, research, practice and understanding of the varied experiences of people who menstruate. An intersectional and inclusive approach to the study of – and advocacy for – menstruation and menstruators is more important than ever. This is particularly true at a time where many governments are making repeated attacks on the most marginalised people in society, from people seeking asylum to our trans and gender diverse siblings, and from international students – for example, through restrictive visa reforms in the UK – to our rights in workplaces. How does this environment impact people who menstruate, their access to menstrual management, and public understandings of menstruation? This conference seeks contributions from academics, activists, artists, policymakers and organisations of all kinds to discuss how we make our work on menstruation inclusive.

For more information and to submit your proposal, please use the online form here: <https://menstruationresearchnetwork.org.uk/call-for-papers/>

# PICTURE OF THE MONTH



*Capturing moments of joy and camaraderie: Dr Constance Mackworth-Young, Dr Chido Dziva Chikwari and Ethel Dauya share an unforgettable laugh during a delightful cruise in Victoria Falls*

# NEW EMPLOYEES

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to our new team members at THRU ZIM: Takudzwa Mwanza, Research Assistant for The Com-BP-Group study, and Nonhlanhla Lindelwe Ndondo, Social Scientist for the PIMS study. We are excited to have them on board and look forward to their valuable contributions to our research endeavors.



*Nonhlanhla Lindelwe Ndondo and Takudzwa Mwanza*



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<https://twitter.com/ThruZim>

**THANK YOU!**