MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
6 JUNE 2023

UPDATES

CHIEDZA AND STICH TRIALS’ DISSEMINATION MEETING

On June 1st, we held the CHIEDZA and STICH trials’ dissemination meeting in Harare. The CHIEDZA trial, implemented in 3 provinces across Zimbabwe (Harare, Bulawayo, and Mashonaland East) was cluster randomized and aimed to investigate the impact of a community-based integrated HIV services and sexual reproductive health services (SRH) including menstrual health management. The STICH trial, imbedded in CHIEDZA, measured the uptake and yield of STI screening and comprehensive case management including partner notification. The event opened with a welcome speech from Group Captain Dr. M. Dobbie from the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC). The speech recognized a need to cater for adolescents’ SRH needs in the context of high rates of HIV and STI infections among adolescents in Zimbabwe and highlighted key findings and recommendations from the trials. The event was chaired and facilitated by Dr. Tsitsi Apollo from MOHCC and Dr. Francis Ndowa from the Skin & Genito-Urinary Medicine Clinic.

The CHIEDZA investigation team shared overall findings with stakeholders from government and NGO sectors that either played a role as trial implementers or are actively involved in adolescent health, SRH, and HIV research. Insightful information was shared from both trials that included findings on the uptake of HIV and SRH services and STI testing by adolescents, menstrual health and family planning for adolescents, results from both trials, process evaluation and public engagement. In addition to this, 2 panel discussions were held on the experiences of the CHIEDZA/STICH providers and participants and on the topic of “Moving Evidence to Programmes: What do we need?” The dissemination meeting managed to effectively engage stakeholders with the trials’ findings while offering thoughts on how to improve HIV and SRH interventions and developing relevant policies to support adolescent SRH needs.

MENSTRUAL HEALTH DAY - DR. MANDI TEMBO PRESENTS AT THE AFRICAN MENSTRUAL HEALTH SYMPOSIUM, THE MENSTRUAL RESEARCH NETWORK CONFERENCE, AND THE INFOPOINT HYBRID CONFERENCE IN BERLIN

May 28th was Menstrual Health and Dr. Mandi Tembo presented her research findings from her PhD research work on the uptake, acceptability, and effectiveness of a comprehensive menstrual health intervention for young women in Zimbabwe. Dr. Tembo shared her research findings with colleagues in Scotland, Berlin, and across Africa.
The Art of Ageing series of community workshops continued in Bulawayo and completed in rural and urban areas of The Gambia. These workshops continued to document the unique ageing experiences of both men and women aged 60 and above in respect to health, family dynamics and day-to-day life. During her time in The Gambia, Dr. Mandi Tembo, also delivered a seminar on the importance of public engagement and highlighted some of the ongoing public engagement THRU ZIM has been conducting in communities. The Art of Ageing project is excited to see itself moving a step closer to producing a film narrative that features enriching content from both countries that encapsulates experiences around ageing.

In other exciting news, The Art of Ageing competition is currently underway: https://www.artofageingafrica.com/competition. The Chronicle Zimbabwe also published an article on these workshops and more information can be found here: https://www.chronicle.co.zw/old-age-health-challenges-under-spotlight/

**PROF. CELIA GREGSON AWARDED THE NIHR GLOBAL RESEARCH PROFESSORSHIP**

We would like to congratulate Prof. Celia Gregson for being awarded the NIHR Global Research Professorship to conduct a new research study that will help people in sub-Saharan Africa age well. The 5-year programme led by Prof. Celia Gregson and researchers from the University of Bristol in the UK, will analyze data from 5,030 older adults living in Zimbabwe, The Gambia, and South Africa, to understand how commonly people are ageing healthily - and unhealthily - and how this influences quality of life. The project ‘Healthy ageing in sub-Saharan Africa’ will develop an evidence-based clinical framework to assess and manage chronic disorders of ageing, such as walking, balance, nutrition, memory, mood, eyesight, and hearing. The team will work with a range of stakeholders including healthcare experts and older people themselves to develop a health check-up for people over 65 years. The check-up will be trialed in Zimbabwe to assess the feasibility, acceptability, effectiveness, and costs of implementing community-based health checks. Towards the end of the research programme a set of tools will be developed to guide the person-centered assessment and management of older people, ready for scale-up across sub-Saharan Africa.
Tinashe Mwaturura, AVAPAR Study Coordinator, attended the 41st Annual Meeting of the European Society for Pediatric Infectious Diseases (ESPID), previously held in Lisbon, Portugal from the 8th to 12th of May. Tinashe presented an e-poster on how improving pre-laboratory blood culture processing is a multifaceted and complex matter requiring contextual intervention and long-term monitoring. Tinashe also presented on whether blood cultures are an unfeasible gold standard in low resource settings in a research session titled “The Implementation Gap – How to turn the best evidence in to reality to improve identification and management of neonatal sepsis in low resource settings?”

Tinashe presents on preanalytical quality improvement to ensure high quality blood culture results

PRESENTATION AT THE 41ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC INFECTIOUS DISEASES

5 MINUTES WITH...

DR. KEVIN MARTIN

What do you do and when did you start?
I am a clinical research fellow and PhD student, registered at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. I first came to Zimbabwe in 2019 as an MSc student, when I conducted a mixed methods study nested within the CHIEDZA trial, assessing the uptake of STI testing among youth. This led to an evaluation of on-site testing for STIs using GeneXpert at CHIEDZA sites in Bulawayo. These studies laid the groundwork for my PhD, which is the IPSAZ study (“Investigating point-of-care diagnostics for sexually transmitted infections and antimicrobial resistance in primary care in Zimbabwe (IPSAZ)”), which aims to implement and evaluate a strategy of point-of-care testing for STIs in pregnant women. I was happy to be able to return to Zimbabwe last August to take up this role, in an area that I am passionate about. As primary investigator of the IPSAZ study, my primary responsibilities involve study design, ensuring regulatory approvals are in place, study co-ordination, data management and analysis, and generally dealing with the day-to-day running of the study. Outside of IPSAZ, I have also been involved with some of the CHIEDZA/STICH analyses. Some publications include: “It was difficult to offer same day results”: evaluation of community-based point-of-care testing for sexually transmitted infections among youth using the GeneXpert platform in Zimbabwe and Uptake of and factors associated with testing for sexually transmitted infections in community-based settings among youth in Zimbabwe: A mixed-methods study.
Where can we find you in the office?
I am in the Field Management Office.

What do you enjoy about your work?
I find research generally very rewarding, but the parts I enjoy most are where you can be most creative. This includes identifying research questions and working out how best to design a study to answer them, through to problem solving in analysis, and writing up results to try and influence other researchers and policymakers. Alongside this, as a clinician, I also find it really satisfying that, in addition to collecting data to analyze, present and try to influence policy, that the IPSAZ study itself provides individual benefits to our participants by testing and treating for STIs. Finally, I find collaborating with others, both within THRU ZIM and beyond, really fulfilling. I think it is so important to work with others with different skills and perspectives, to develop high quality research that is both relevant and rigorous.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Everything everywhere all at once: Prof. Katharina Kranzer’s Inaugural Lecture
Please take note of Prof. Katharina Kranzer’s inaugural lecture scheduled for June 28th at 1715 to 1815hrs (BST). Follow this link for more information:
https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/events/everything-everywhere-all-once-interdisciplinary-research-across-multiple

Prof. Celia Gregson Inaugural Lecture
Please take note of Prof. Celia Gregson’s inaugural lecture which is set to be held on the June 24th from 0945-1315hrs (BST). Don’t miss out on this opportunity to learn more about Prof. Gregson’s academic journey and research. Register below for more information:
Upcoming Social Science Working Group Session
The next Social Science Research Group Seminar will be held on June 21st at 1100-1200hrs (CAT), with food provided afterwards. At this seminar, Faith Kandiye and Chipo Nyamayaro (THRU ZIM), will speak about ‘Participant or non-participant observation: experiences from process evaluation within a complex intervention’. Please note that this is a date change from the previous date, which was previously scheduled for the 31st May.

Zoom link: https://lshtm.zoom.us/j/91903997874?pwd=WGVFNTg0VExyTDhNQjUyZjJiQ3Bwdz09. Meeting ID: 919 0399 7874. Password: 418238

Early Career Researchers’ Club presents a narrative workshop with Prof. Ulrika Maude
Please take note of this upcoming Early Career Researchers’ Club meeting scheduled for Thursday the 15th of June at 1600-1700hrs (CAT). It will be a close reading of ‘The Voyage’ by Katharine Mansfield, facilitated by Prof. Ulrika Maude from Bristol University. This is part of a series of narrative workshops to be held in Zimbabwe and The Gambia and will be focusing on ageing.

THRU ZIM study room
Available to all staff and students is our study room for those that require a quiet space to work on academic commitments. The study room is the former Y-Check office located next to the Fractures E3 office.

‘R’ WhatsApp Group
Individuals using the ‘R’ statistical programme, please feel free to join the WhatsApp platform to be kept up to date on all ‘R’ related opportunities and announcements.

Link: https://chat.whatsapp.com/LpxX6UdAS3k8Namfy7eZs3

THRU ZIM study registrations and updates
To all study leads, please take note of the study registrations and updates spreadsheet which contains information pertaining to study ethical approvals. Information highlights ethical approval expiry dates that need to be noted. You are all also required to update the spreadsheet with missing information pertaining to your ethical approvals as well.

Link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1jyRcoKbCHn6IH2PVQ2VbWC5nmmhnpiCLttkNoNS1p7mE/edit#gid=0

THRU ZIM MSc project list
To those that have an agreement with MSc students, the THRU ZIM MSc project list needs to be updated with their information. This is a working document that needs to be updated as you reach agreements with students over the coming months.

Link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15WWhSrHDSYB2PR7NIFNYUanMANsGd-1/edit#gid=1747447857

PUBLICATIONS
Please do send us your submissions for “Picture of the Month” – it really can be about anything you and colleagues found interesting, entertaining, funny, and/or visually stunning. Fun captions are encouraged.

“Picture of the Month” will receive a small token of our appreciation, so let’s get creative!

Share your news, publications, pictures, announcements: publicengagement@thruzim.org. Follow us on Twitter: https://twitter.com/ThruZim

THANK YOU!