



# THRU ZIM

## THE HEALTH RESEARCH UNIT ZIMBABWE

### BI-WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

16 AUGUST 2022

## NEWS

### CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

A huge congratulations to Dr. Chido Dziva Chikwari and Tinashe Mwaturura for graduating from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). Tinashe completed an MSc Epidemiology programme and Dr. Chido completed her PhD programme and was awarded the Woodruff Medal for Most Outstanding and Clinically Relevant PhD. We took some time to catch-up with them as they shared their unique academic experiences at LSHTM.



*Dr. Chido Dziva Chikwari*

I really enjoyed the independence that came with doing a PhD. Although this was part of the hardest bits, working to bring something to life and answering important research questions was what I found most enjoyable. My PhD also involved a fair amount of fieldwork and I enjoyed the time I spent in Bulawayo and Mangwe with all the stakeholders, participants and my amazing research assistants. I had a really great team and they really made the work so much more enjoyable. I also enjoyed sharing the research findings on multiple platforms including seminars, conferences, and meetings both in Zimbabwe and abroad. One of my fondest memories of the PhD was attending the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in the USA at which I received a scholarship. One of the biggest challenges I faced in my PhD was having to learn to take frequent constructive criticism and not perceiving it as personal failure. I have learned to view constructive criticism as a function of growth and thus helped me to produce a better PhD. I had to learn how to do new things, which at the time was difficult for me. I believe I came out a better person due to these challenges. I plan to continue working in Academia i.e., doing research with the possibility of a Post Doc soon.



Tinashe Mwaturura

Looking back on my time as an MSc student, I really enjoyed the diversity of the student body in my class. Most of my peers were from different parts of the world and I found pleasure in getting to know them on a personal level. From our interactions, I learned that we all had similar goals which I found to be beneficial as we were all working towards the same things. The programme was well organized. The extensive support I received from my peers, tutors and lecturers helped to me to better engage with the concepts I learnt in my programme. Practical assignments and unlimited access to resources also contributed to my success during my studies. I had a healthy balance between school and leisure. My peers and I would often bond over drinks and tour London. The main challenge I faced in my programme were the learning adjustments brought on by COVID-19. Moving away from in-person lectures to remote learning was a challenge as this limited my interactions with my peers. It also got pretty lonely which affected my level of academic motivation. The support I would receive from being around my peers that helped to keep myself motivated, lacked at the time. My future plans are to put into practice all that I learnt in my academic journey, to practice as an epidemiologist in various settings, to embark on a PhD programme and to pursue career development opportunities in my field.

## VITALITY\_MIND STUDY TRAINING



VITALITY team receives training on the use of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (KABC)

The VITALITY trial has started an all new sub-study that aims to assess neurocognitive function in children and adolescents living with HIV enrolled in the VITALITY trial (VITALITY\_Mind). The VITALITY\_Mind team underwent two weeks of training on the protocol, study procedures and cognitive assessment toolkits that included the PLUS-Executive function toolkit - an android tablet based cognitive assessment toolkit, NIH toolbox and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (KABC). The training was very beneficial for the field team who are now looking forward to enrolling their first pilot participant this month.

## PRESENTATION AT WE MOVE ADOLESCENT HEALTH SERIES WEBINAR

Dr. Aoife Doyle, presented at the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation We Move Adolescent health series seminar focussing on adolescents, mHealth, digital tools and strategies. Reflecting upon her experiences in Zvatinoda! and Y-Check, she provided insights on using digital health tools in adolescent research in Zimbabwe.

**Adolescents, mHealth, digital tools and strategies**

26 July 2022, 14h00-15h30 (SAST)

**International speaker:**  
**Prof Aoife Doyle**  
 Associate Professor Of Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

**Local speakers:**  
**Ms Dominica Dhakwa**  
 Chief of Party-DREAMS RISE Project at Zimbabwe Health Interventions (ZHI)

Plus panelists and entertainment by a local artist

Register using the link below:  
<https://bit.ly/3b82hvj>

CPD Accredited

---

## Y-CHECK COMPLETES PILOT STUDY

---

The pilot continued into July, with the community screening component being added to the primary and secondary school pilot, which had commenced in June. The reception of Y-CHECK services in the community was positive. In total, 35, 16-18-year-olds were enrolled from the community despite the team working one day less than expected. Upon delivery of the hearing screening equipment from hearX, the team returned to every pilot school to complete the hearing screening component using the hearScreen and hearTest web applications. Those who failed the hearing test were referred to our partner - WizEar, who gave the adolescents we worked with comprehensive ear care and management.

The team successfully completed the pilot study on the 15th of July, with 173 participants screened, treated and/or referred. After which, the team took a well-earned break. In the latter stages of the month, the team began preparations for the main Y-CHECK study, which will start in September. The team met the prospective grade 5 participants at Chaminuka and St Mary's Primary Schools. At these meetings, they simulated the entire study check-up visit to give adolescents a better understanding of the study's main activities and to educate them on the importance of adolescent health. After meeting the students, the team held a series of sensitization meetings with parents.



*Y-CHECK team in the community*



*Y-CHECK post-pilot debrief*



*Y-CHECK meeting with St Mary's Primary School Students*

---

## THRU ZIM PARTNERS IN THE MUFASSA GRANT

---

Our research unit has been selected as a consortium partner in the Medical Research Council (MRC) funded project entitled: Musculoskeletal functional ability in three diverse Sub-Saharan Africa Populations; assessing muscle strength & function to understand healthy ageing (MUFASSA). We will deliver blood samples collected through the FRACTURES-E3 study to the University of Bristol for DNA genotyping using H3Africa array, along with other blood samples gathered from the rest of the consortium. The consortium includes: University of Southampton, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Wits Health Consortium and the African Institute of Biomedical Science and Technology (AiBST). Blood samples in Zimbabwe are to be processed and stored by the AiBST laboratory.



---

## KNOWM STUDY GRANTED RCZ APPROVAL

---

Multimorbidity and Knowledge Architectures: An Interdisciplinary Global Health Collaboration (KnowM) brings together a wide range of researchers, policymakers, healthcare professionals and patient groups to develop an interdisciplinary conceptual framework and research strengthening agenda for responding to multimorbidity in the global south. KnowM study has recently received its approval from the Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ) and is ready to start data collection this month. They will be working with Ardent Creative to produce audio-visual case studies of patients living with multiple chronic conditions, which will be used during collaborative workshops later this year.

---

## MAGUS BEGINS ENROLMENT

---

Multi-Country Aetiology of Genital Ulcer Study (MAGUS), has begun enrolment from two sites. Qualitative work started with in-depth interviews with participants. The study also submitted a protocol amendment to the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (MRCZ) and have received approval. The amendment was for in-depth interviews with healthcare service providers.



*MAGUS team completes sample collection for first client*



*VAXEF team reading through the amended protocol*

---

## VAXEF REFRESHER TRAINING

---

VAXEF study held a refresher training for its team this month. The training involved a read-through of the amended protocol, practical sessions on HbA1C testing, data management, group discussions on challenges and a revision session on usage of the VAXEF forms. The study is investigating the vaccine effectiveness of Sinopharm and Sinovac among people living with chronic conditions in Zimbabwe.

---

## THRU ZIM VEHICLE FLEET

---

Our fleet currently consists of the following vehicles: Honda Fit motor vehicles (6), Toyota RAV 4 motor vehicles (2), minibuses (5) and motorbikes (3). In total we have 18 vehicles.



---

## PUBLICATIONS

---

Marambire ET, Banze D, Mfinanga A, Mutsvangwa J, Mbunda TD, Ntinginya EN, Celso K, Kallenius G, Calderwood CJ, Geldmacher C, Held K, Appalarowthu T, Rieß F, Panzner U, Heinrich N, Kranzer K. Early risk assessment in paediatric and adult household contacts of confirmed tuberculosis cases by novel diagnostic tests (ERASE-TB): protocol for a prospective, non-interventional, longitudinal, multicountry cohort study *BMJ Open* 2022;12:e060985. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2022-060985

Brandenburg J, Heyckendorf J, Marwitz F, Zehethofer N, Linnemann L, Gisch N, Karaköse H, Reimann M, Kranzer K, Kalsdorf B, Sanchez-Carballo P, Weinkauff M, Scholz V, Malm S, Homolka S, Gaede KI, Herzmann C, Schaible UE, Hölscher C, Reiling N, Schwudke D. Tuberculostearic Acid-Containing Phosphatidylinositols as Markers of Bacterial Burden in Tuberculosis. *ACS Infect Dis*. 2022 Jul 8;8(7):1303-1315. doi: 10.1021/acsinfectdis.2c00075. Epub 2022 Jun 28. PMID: 35763439

Nthumba PM, Huang Y, Perdakis G, Kranzer K. Surgical Antibiotic Prophylaxis in Children Undergoing Surgery: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Surg Infect (Larchmt)*. 2022 Jul 12. doi: 10.1089/sur.2022.131.

Bateson A, Ortiz Canseco J, McHugh TD, Witney AA, Feuerriegel S, Merker M, Kohl TA, Utpatel C, Niemann S, Andres S, Kranzer K, Maurer FP, Ghodousi A, Borroni E, Cirillo DM, Wijkander M, Toro JC, Groenheit R, Werngren J, Machado D, Viveiros M, Warren RM, Sirgel F, Dippenaar A, Köser CU, Sun E, Timm J. Ancient and recent differences in the intrinsic susceptibility of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex to pretomanid. *J Antimicrob Chemother*. 2022 May 29;77(6):1685-1693. doi: 10.1093/jac/dkac070. PMID: 35260883

Finci I, Albertini A, Merker M, Andres S, Bablshvili N, Barilar I, Cáceres T, Crudu V, Gotuzzo E, Hapeela N, Hoffmann H, Hoogland C, Kohl TA, Kranzer K, Mantsoki A, Maurer FP, Nicol MP, Noroc E, Plesnik S, Rodwell T, Ruhwald M, Savidge T, Salfinger M, Streicher E, Tukvadze N, Warren R, Zemanay W, Zurek A, Niemann S, Denkinge CM. Investigating resistance in clinical *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex isolates with genomic and phenotypic antimicrobial susceptibility testing: a multicentre observational study. *Lancet Microbe*. 2022 Jul 27;S2666-5247(22)00116-1. doi: 10.1016/S2666-5247(22)00116-1. Online ahead of print. PMID: 35907429

---

# 5 MINUTES WITH...

**RICHARD JOHN CHINANGWA**



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

I am an assistant coordinator and logistician. I started with THRU ZIM in April 2018. I oversee THRU ZIM logistics which includes vehicle movement and maintenance as well as the storage of all study supplies. I ensure that vehicles with study teams leave our premise on time daily and that our drivers are equipped with all the supplies required for field work. This includes delivery of specimens, transportation of study participants and teams, fuel allocation and general supplies. We rely on a requisition system to acquire supplies, a vehicle requesting system for staff requiring access to vehicle for fieldwork. A vehicle movement board helps us to keep track of our vehicles and to determine vehicle availability at any given time.

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

Everywhere! You can find me either supervising vehicle allocation outside, organizing supplies in our storerooms or in the administration/finance office distributing airtime and fuel coupons.

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

I enjoy interacting with our staff and study teams in respect to any logistical issues. Be it assigning drivers to support a study or liaising with study leads on supplies they require. It is fulfilling work as it keeps me busy and on my toes. My department is very integral to our operations as a research unit. Distribution of study supplies and equipment is done in a systematic way which ensures efficiency accountability.

# NEW EMPLOYEES

We would like to welcome, Dr. Ronald Manhibi, who has joined the Y-Check team as its Digital Health Coordinator.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## **Book fundraiser for VITALITY\_Mind study**

Dr. Nyasha Dzavakwa and Dr. Annalie Shears have started this funding initiative to help support the children they are working with, who do not have access to books at home. If you are interested, please send your donations here:

[https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/books4zim?utm\\_term=8PYANrAWr](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/books4zim?utm_term=8PYANrAWr). Alternatively donate second hand books here at 8 Ross Avenue, Belgravia.

## **PhD Research Club Meeting August 2022**

The upcoming PhD research club meeting will be held at our premise on Tuesday 30th of August 2022 from 1600 – 1700hrs (CAT). Dr. Vicky Simms will be presenting: Paper versus audio for mental health symptoms data collection: a methodological randomised controlled trial. There is also an option to join in virtually.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82240993372?pwd=TkE5N3NMcjUraUJ3Z29kMFgoUGFjdzo9#success>

## **STI Research Interest Group (STIRIG) Webinar September 2022**

Professor David Mabey from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) will be presenting highlights from the 23rd IUSTI World Congress, feeding back on cutting-edge topics in STIs and showcasing the work presented by LSHTM researchers during the conference, demonstrating the breadth and impact of LSHTM's research.

Please take note of the following details:

Date: Thursday 22nd of September 2022

Time: 1300 – 1400hrs (BST)

Speaker: Professor David Mabey, LSHTM

Further details and link here: <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/events/research-highlights-international-union-against-sexually-transmitted-infections>

## **ASTMH 2022: Malaria Modelling Meeting**

The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) is hosting its annual meeting this year in Seattle. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Malaria team, together with the Malaria Modelling Community, Applied Malaria Modelling network (AMMNet), and the Institute for Disease Modelling, are delighted to be hosting a half-day gathering of malaria modelers on Saturday 29th of October 2022. There is an option to join this meeting virtually. If you are interested please register here: <https://cvent.me/qPngXy>

# PICTURE OF THE MONTH



*MAGUS team waves "M" signs*

# OPPORTUNITIES

---

## **Y-CHECK Data Entry Internship**

An opportunity has arisen for a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science or Bachelor of Science in Statistics student, who requires work experience to fulfil their academic requirements. The data entry student on attachment will work together with the research team and data department to ensure accurate data entry and management.

Position: Data Entry Intern

Duration: 6 months

Application deadline: Wednesday 17th of August 2022

Contact [mufaronashe@gmail.com](mailto:mufaronashe@gmail.com) for more information.

## **Zambart based CREATE PhD fellowship program**

Call for applications for the CREATE PhD fellowship program based at Zambart, Lusaka, Zambia. Follow this link to apply: <https://www.zambart.org.zm/create-phd-programme-africa-health-research-training-programme/>

## **Chevening Scholarships**

Study in the UK to expand your network and learn vital skills before returning home to achieve your goals and create positive change. Find out more at: <http://chevening.org/scholarships>

---

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.

Share your news, publications, pictures, announcements: [publicengagement@thruzim.org](mailto:publicengagement@thruzim.org). Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ThruZim>

# THANK YOU!

---