



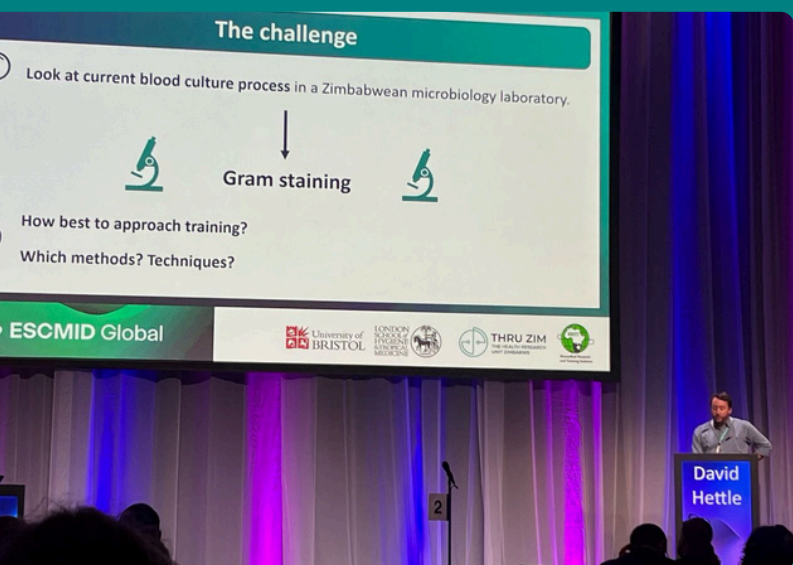
UPDATES

AVAPAR-EPLEX study showcases at ESCMID global congress

David Hettle and Tinashe Mwaturura presented findings from the AVAPAR-EPLEX study on progress in managing neonatal sepsis through improved blood culture processes at the Congress of the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID Global), held from 11th to 15th April in Vienna, Austria. Their two presentations highlighted the challenges in delivering excellent diagnostic microbiology in laboratories in low-middle income settings, before outlining several of the adaptations which have been trialed locally in Harare and the progress which these have delivered in offering more accurate and timely diagnostic results.

The congress brought together over 20,000 experts in the fields of in diagnostic microbiology and clinical infectious diseases, covering a vast range of topics and innovations, including significant streams focusing on low-middle income settings. Drawing together experts from across the world, particular focus was placed on antimicrobial stewardship and how best to safeguard antibiotics and other antimicrobial agents in future. Significantly, a study group of ESCMID hosted an inaugural meeting to discuss the practicalities of antimicrobial stewardship in low-middle income settings, with representation from many African countries.

Attending this conference led to many links with healthcare professionals in the field, in particular those who have looked to novel ways to improve lab systems in similar settings to Zimbabwe. David and Tinashe reflected that the use of pre-existing laboratory networks, such as those which work for TB, can likely support broader microbiology work. Also, that the challenges faced in diagnostics in low-middle income settings will only be addressed once the specific, on-the-ground issues are clearly acknowledged, to make sure that context-specific solutions and innovations can be developed.



David Hettle and Tinashe Mwaturura present progress in managing neonatal sepsis

Dr Edith Majonga receives prestigious International Investigator's Award

We are delighted to congratulate Dr. Edith Majonga on receiving the prestigious International Investigator's Award, which enabled her to attend the 32nd Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI 2025) held in San Francisco, USA, from March 9–12.

At the conference, Dr. Majonga presented key findings from the Cardiac Outcomes in adolescents with perinatal HIV (CORD) study, which investigated myocardial disease in adolescents with perinatal HIV (PHIV) using advanced cardiac magnetic resonance imaging. The study found evidence of subclinical myocardial injury, with reduced cardiac function and elevated ST2 (a cardiac stress biomarker) among adolescents who were not virally suppressed. These findings have significant implications for long-term care as adolescents with PHIV transition into adulthood.



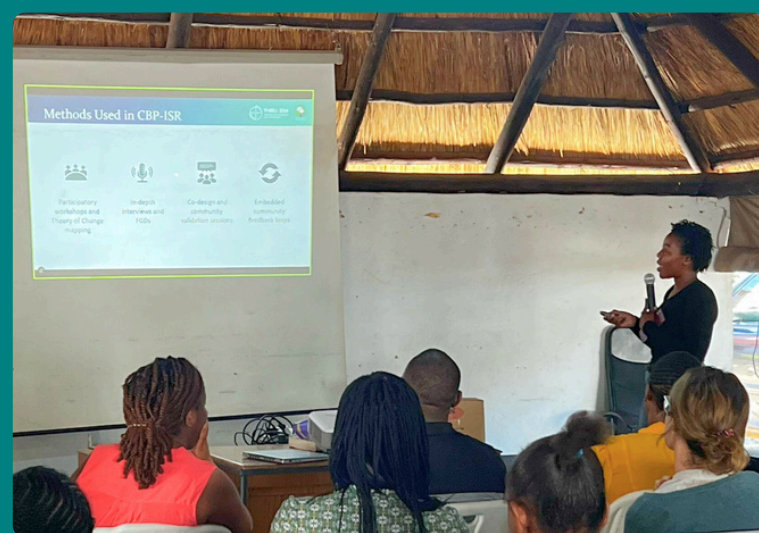
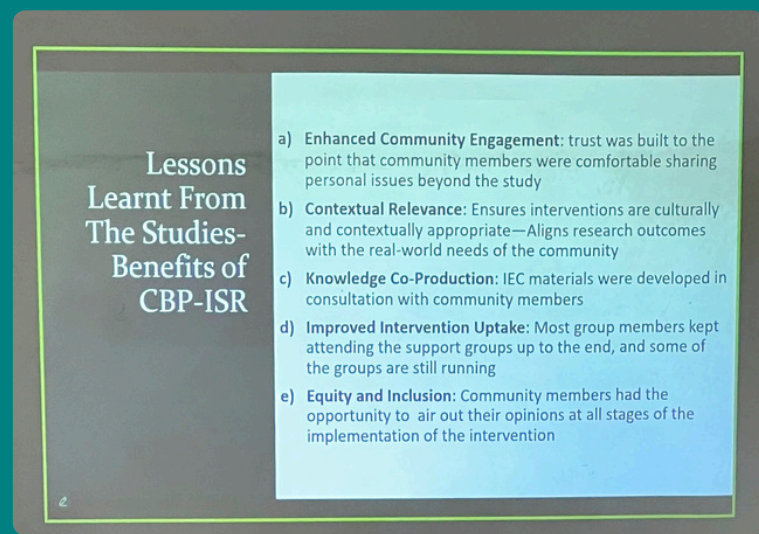
Co-designing for impact: Lessons in Community-Driven Research

The Zimbabwe Qualitative Research Network (ZQRN) recently hosted an engaging discussion on Community-Based Participatory Implementation Science Research, featuring Chipo Mpandaguta, Cuthbert Sekanevana, and Fadzai Mhino.

The trio shared how CBP-ISR brings researchers and communities together as equal partners to design and deliver health solutions. Drawing from their experiences in the Com-BP and KOSHESAI studies, they demonstrated how involving communities at every stage—from identifying priorities to leading activities—resulted in high engagement, improved health outcomes, and community-led initiatives that continue beyond the life of the projects.

CBP-ISR combines the strengths of Community-Based Participatory Research (emphasizing shared learning and ownership) with Implementation Science (embedding interventions into real-world settings). This approach ensures that health solutions are not only evidence-based but also culturally relevant, equitable, and sustainable.

As they noted, "When communities and researchers collaborate as equals, sustainable and impactful solutions emerge." The session sparked thoughtful dialogue and renewed commitment to centering communities in research for sustainable and meaningful change.



Presenters share experiences and insights on co-designing impactful, community-led health interventions.

Translating pathogenesis insights into tools to tackle Tuberculosis

Dr Naomi Walker, Senior Clinical Lecturer and PhD Supervisor at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, recently delivered an insightful seminar on the evolving challenges and opportunities in tuberculosis (TB) research. Her presentation offered a comprehensive overview of the global TB pandemic, underlining the rising incidence of TB cases worldwide and the lasting health challenges that TB survivors continue to face.

A key focus of the discussion was the complexity of diagnosing TB in people living with HIV. Dr Walker explored how co-infection complicates clinical presentation and treatment timelines, particularly around the initiation of antiretroviral therapy. The seminar also delved into the emerging role of matrix metalloproteinases in TB pathology and discussed the potential of doxycycline as an adjunct therapy—highlighting the need to explore novel treatment strategies.

Participants raised important concerns about the effectiveness of current diagnostic tools and the limited understanding of post-TB lung disease. There was also a call for more research into immune reconstitution inflammatory syndrome (IRIS), which remains a significant issue for TB-HIV co-infected patients during recovery.

The session concluded with a collective call to action: more robust, multidisciplinary research is needed to improve diagnosis, treatment, and long-term outcomes for TB patients, especially in high-burden, resource-limited settings.



Dr Walker explores challenges and opportunities in TB research.

Stepping up with ActiBelts in TB research

As part of the upcoming SIMBA Study, researchers will be using ActiBelts to measure physical activity in people with pulmonary tuberculosis, helping to better understand how TB affects mobility and recovery.

To get familiar with the devices, THRU Zim team members ran a fun internal trial. Four staff members — Ethel, Mary, Collins, and Nomatter — each wore an ActiBelt for 24 hours in a friendly step-count competition. The results are still being analyzed, but the winner will soon be crowned and awarded a SIMBA-branded cap.

Kudos to the team for stepping up — stay tuned for the big reveal.



THRU ZIM staff test ActiBelts for the SIMBA Study

5 MINUTES WITH...

Grant Murewanhema



What do you do and when did you start?

I am a CREATE PhD Fellow with a background in Public Health and Obstetrics and Gynaecology. I currently work as a Clinical Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Zimbabwe. Prior to that, I worked in the public sector in Zimbabwe, where I developed an interest in maternal and child health as well as sexual and reproductive health, inspired by the many challenges faced by marginalized women in Zimbabwe.

My research focuses on the integration of artificial intelligence into ultrasound scanning to improve perinatal outcomes in Zimbabwe. At THRU-ZIM, I am excited to be working as a Co-Investigator on the PROMISE study, a clinical trial investigating the effectiveness of an intensive STI testing and treatment intervention on perinatal outcomes among pregnant women in Zimbabwe.

Where can we find you in the office?

You'll find me at the THRU-ZIM offices or in the Department of Child, Adolescent and Women's Health at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Zimbabwe, based at Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals. My time is split between clinical teaching, research supervision and mentorship, and providing patient care.

Who or what inspires you?

The large burden of maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality in Zimbabwe, as well as deaths of women from preventable diseases such as cervical cancer, inspires my work. I grew up in an area where many children were orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.

The desire to look for solutions—especially for women and children, who constituted the bulk of the clients I looked after as a Medical Practitioner—changed the direction of my career from someone wanting to be a specialist in Internal Medicine to an Obstetrician-Gynaecologist and Public Health Physician. My greatest source of inspiration is the internal desire to improve women's health outcomes in our society, and I am grateful to the pioneers of reproductive health research in Zimbabwe whose footsteps I now follow.

Why is Obstetrics and Gynaecology important to you, and what do you enjoy most about it?

My clinical training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology laid the foundation for a research career grounded in understanding the real problems faced by women in our society. It continues to drive my passion for seeking practical solutions to these challenges.

The clinical practice is fulfilling—especially when it results in a healthy mother and baby, the ideal outcome of any pregnancy. Ensuring that women have a positive pregnancy experience is one of my greatest desires.

Over time, I've also realized that while many of us are working to improve outcomes at the individual level, I want to make a broader impact. That's why I see myself as a Public Health Obstetrician-Gynaecologist.

My ultimate goal is to contribute to training a critical mass of Obstetrician-Gynaecologists in Zimbabwe, both in clinical practice and research, to help change the current maternal health landscape and support evidence-based policymaking at the national level.

PICTURES OF THE MONTH



When lunchtime turns into an all-out battle ... The “Unofficial Checkers Championship” rages on!

Welcome new employees

THRU ZIM is excited to welcome new members to our growing team.

- **Naledi Mutsa Victoria Katsande** – Research Assistant – Fractures E3 Study
- **Rumbidzai Marambo** – Research Assistant – Fractures E3 Study
- **Marshal Chiwodza** – Research Assistant – Fractures E3 Study
- **Munyaradzi Mandizvidza** – Research Assistant – Fractures E3 Study
- **Salim Msanga** – Driver – Fractures E3 Study

We look forward to their contributions and wish them all the best in their roles!



Naledi



Munyaradzi



Rumbidzai



Marshal



Salim

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Event: AI for Health in Zimbabwe | June 3–5

We're excited to announce the Artificial Intelligence for Health in Zimbabwe event, a collaboration between UZ, BRTI, and Imperial College London, supported by UK FCDO, Neotree, and Wellcome Trust.

- ◆ Lecture Day (June 3) – Open to undergrads and above. [Register here](#)
- ◆ Early Career Workshop (June 4–5) – For PhD students and postdocs. [Apply here](#)

Save the Date: Seminar on the Human Impact of Global Health Funding Cuts

Join us for a hybrid seminar at the THRU ZIM Gazebo, where LSHTM and partners will present research from Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Ghana documenting the real-world effects of recent global health funding cuts. Speakers will share early findings, tools, and personal stories from the frontline.

Date 05 June 2025 | Time 12:00- 13:30

Hybrid Event – THRU ZIM Gazebo & Online

Add to your calendar: <https://calendar.app.google/dDXdhwtXKw5FFPuR8>

PUBLICATIONS

Tumushime MK, Ruhode N, Neuman M, Watadzaushe C, Mutseta M, et al. (2025) Do community-level factors play a role in HIV self-testing uptake, linkage to services and HIV-related outcomes? **A mixed methods study of community-led HIV self-testing in rural Zimbabwe**. PLOS Global Public Health 5(4): e0003196. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0003196>

Leyla Larsson, Claire J Calderwood, Edson T Marambire, Kathrin Held, Denise Banze, Alfred Mfinanga, Karlos Madziva, Phoebe Walsh, Joseph Jacob, Francisco Trinchán Fernández, Patrick Lungu, Anita Mesic, Celso Khosa, Lilian T Minja, Junior Mutsvangwa, Madhavi Bhargava, Michael Lauseker, Rishi K Gupta, Norbert Heinrich, Katharina Kranzer, On behalf of the ERASE-TB consortium, **Body mass index trajectories and association with tuberculosis risk in a cohort of household contacts in Southern Africa**, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 2025;ciaf222, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciaf222>

Mwaturura T, Olaru ID, Chimhini G, Bwakura-Dangarembizi M, Mangiza M, Chimhuya S, Sado B, Katunga J, Tarupiwa A, Juru A, Mashe T, Pasi C, Chuchu V, Gansallo S. **Rapid bacterial identification and resistance detection using a low complexity molecular diagnostic platform in Zimbabwe**. PLOS Glob Public Health. 2025;5(4):e0004343. [doi:10.1371/journal.pgph.0004343](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0004343).

Share your news, publications, pictures, announcements: ellenchiyindiko@gmail.com

THANK YOU!