Greetings, Fogarty Scholars!

This issue we are spotlighting our students and alumni from Uganda. As always, though, wherever you are we would love to hear about your recent activities. May the new year be productive and prosperous for all of us!

My best to all of you,
Roberta Myers, Editor

Uganda Issue

Feature Article:

Jayne Byakika-Tusiime

Recent Fogarty Scholars from Uganda:

MPH 2006
Flora Banage, MD
Moses Musingu, MD

MPH 2007
Robert Opika Opoka, MD

PhD 2007
Samuel Malamba
PROFILE: JAYNE BYAKIKA- TUSIIME

My interest in HIV/AIDS began early in secondary school in 1988. I learned through personal experiences with afflicted family members and friends that this disease had no cure, and I was inspired to contribute to the management of this disease in some way. I decided to focus on Science subjects in high school and later enrolled for a Pharmacy degree.

My actual interest in HIV treatment matured while I was at Makerere University completing my Bachelor’s degree in Pharmacy in 1996. I completed with honors and subsequently accepted a job as a pharmacist at Mulago Hospital, the National Referral and Teaching Hospital in Uganda. A large proportion of the patients on the medical wards were HIV-infected but could not afford to purchase antiretroviral treatment that was available but prohibitive to most due to its associated high cost. Many patients who initiated therapy interrupted antiretroviral treatment due to the financial demands of sustaining therapy. This compromised treatment and negated the incredible family sacrifices to secure therapy. I knew that adherence to antiretroviral therapy would be a big problem since more and more patients were trying to secure this treatment even though they knew they could not sustain it. Adherence is the Achilles’ heel of successful antiretroviral therapy. Messages about development of resistance and decreasing treatment options did not make sense to the majority of patients with the belief that “dying tomorrow is better than dying today” so they would do with the little they had at the moment and deal with treatment failure whenever it came. I felt a need to investigate this problem further.

In order to develop the research skills to address this problem, I applied for a Masters of Science degree program in Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at Makerere University Kampala in 2001. For my graduate thesis, I independently designed and implemented one of the earliest investigations of adherence to HIV therapy in sub-Saharan Africa. I looked at the prevalence of and factors associated with non-adherence to antiretroviral therapy. Upon completion of the study, I was honored to give the first oral presentation on HIV antiretroviral adherence at the Tenth Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections. Results were subsequently published in the International Journal of AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections with me as the lead author. It was an important contribution to shifting opinion from self-pay to fully subsidized antiretroviral therapy, and it led to further research and publications. Shortly after I qualified from the program, I was invited to teach pharmacoepidemiology as there was a great shortage of qualified staff to run the program. To improve on my knowledge in pharmacoepidemiology, I enrolled for a short course in pharmacoepidemiology at University of London, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

I have a strong passion for teaching and I wish to develop my research and quantitative skills further through PhD training at Berkeley. I aspire for a full faculty position at Makerere University, the institution of higher learning in Uganda that has so positively shaped my career, so that I can train other African scientists in research methodology skills.

In Uganda until recently male children were considered more important and useful than female children. As a result, girls were often not given the opportunity to go to school or pursue their studies. I was fortunate that my parents considered girls and boys as equal (because they were educated themselves) and gave an opportunity to all of us to go to school. I applied myself throughout my studies and now I am determined to take on this advanced study to demonstrate to girls in my country that they too can be successful in the academic world. This will encourage other parents to send and support their girls in school.

Since coming to Berkeley, I have become interested in the impacts of nutrition on clinical outcomes in HIV, and I will be taking coursework in nutrition in the near future with the idea that research in this area may become part of my dissertation. My goal is to return to my country following these studies and work for my people in Uganda, training them in research methodology.
News of Recent Ugandan Graduates

Flora Banage, MD (MPH '06) is HIV/AIDS Program Medical Specialist at the Uganda Virus Research Institute in Entebbe.

Anne Gasasira, MD (MPH '03) is back at U.C. Berkeley working on her Ph.D. in Epidemiology.

Samuel Malamba (PhD '07) has returned to Uganda as a Program Statistician at CDC-Uganda in Entebbe.

Moses Musinguzi, MD (MPH '06) is working with the Medical Research Council at Uganda Virus Research Institute. He is the Clinical Trial Manager for the ARROW (Antiretroviral Research for Watoto) study.

Robert Opika Opoka, MD (MPH '07) has resumed his work as a pediatrician at the Department of Pediatrics at Mulago Hospital in Kampala.

... And a Not So Recent Ugandan Grad

Moses Kamya, MD (MPH '95) is a leader in malaria research and HIV care in Uganda. He is Associate Professor in the Department of Medicine at Makerere University Medical School and administers the Masters of Medicine Program, teaches medical students and post-graduates in didactic lectures and ward rounds. His major research interest is the interaction between malaria and HIV infection. He is currently Co-PI on an NIH study and project director for a research collaboration with UCSF and PI of the Infectious Diseases Institute HIV cohort. He acts as a consultant on various task forces for the Uganda AIDS Commission and the Uganda Ministry of Health HIV and Malaria Control Programs and is one of the founding members of the Academic Alliance for AIDS Care and Prevention in Africa.

Flag of Uganda
News from All Over

Purnima Madhivanan Wins Award

Purnima Madhivanan (MPH ’03, PhD pending) has won the prestigious International Leadership Award 2007 instituted by the Elizabeth Glaser Paediatric AIDS Foundation, South Africa. Dr. Madhivanan is one of three recipients of the award, which supports physicians and scientists worldwide who have the training and potential to develop pediatric HIV programs but lack the funding to do so.

“This year’s recipients are accomplished and dedicated men and women whose work promises to make a real difference in the lives of families in their nations, and in the larger battle against paediatric AIDS,” according to foundation president and CEO Pamela W. Barnes.

“Dr. Madhivanan’s program will help countless families in Mysore taluk, and we are delighted to recognize and support her efforts. We established the international Leadership Award in 2002 to provide critical resources to just such highly trained researchers, physicians, and public health professionals in the developing world. We are proud to support their efforts and welcome them into the family of scientists, clinicians, and implementers funded by the Elizabeth Glaser Paediatric AIDS Foundation,” the release said.

In India, Dr. Madhivanan will train traditional birth attendants in Mysore taluk to provide services to prevent the transmission of HIV from mother to child.

Dr. Madhivanan plans to establish a network of such attendants to assist in identifying pregnant women, provide information on PMTCT, and refer antenatal cases to a mobile reproductive healthcare van designed to provide care and referrals. The program would train 134 traditional birth attendants from each village in Mysore taluk.

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Got a tale to tell about your recent activities or plans in the immediate future? Write us! The more you share with us, the better this newsletter will be!

Hello from the Epidemiology staff, left to right: Roberta Myers, Diane Hinkly, Ron Jeremicz, Susan Meyer, Juanita Cook. (Photo credit: Madhukar Pai)