Greetings, Fogarty Scholars!

I hope you enjoy our Pan-African issue. I’ve tried to put in a little bit of everything. I really like hearing from alumni who have been gone from Berkeley for a few years—it’s fun to see what you have been up to! Next issue will be our Pan-American issue. Stay tuned!

Till next time, as always . . .

My best to all of you,
Roberta Myers, Editor

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Student Profile: John Paul Ekwaru

John Paul Ekwaru completed his Bachelor’s in Statistics at Makerere University in Uganda and his Biostatistics M.Sc. at McMaster University in Canada. After receiving his master’s, he worked as a lecturer and biostatistician at his alma mater in Uganda, before joining the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Uganda as a statistician.

In 1999, he received the International Statistical Institute (ISI) Jan Tinbergen Award for young statisticians from developing countries.

He has participated in various investigations relating to HIV, malaria, reproductive health, adolescent health, and pharmacologic interventions.

As a statistician with the CDC, he has provided statistical support in study design, data management and analysis to physicians, epidemiologists and behavioral scientists at the CDC and health service researchers working with projects supported by the CDC in Uganda. For his outstanding skills in biostatistics and creativity in methods that greatly enabled the work of fellow researchers, he received two meritorious honor awards (in 2003 and 2005) from the US State Department.

As a doctoral student at UC Berkeley, he has participated in analysis and co-authored a paper published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, linking father absence to early puberty among girls, based on data from the Cohort Study of Young Girls’ Nutrition, Environment and Transitions (CYGNET), an epidemiologic project of the Bay Area Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Center (BCERC), which is a NIEHS-NCI funded collaborative effort between UCSF, Kaiser Permanente Division of Research, and the California Department of Public Health.

For his doctoral research, Paul is investigating the efficacy of the prevention messages on HIV infection among youth in Uganda.

His lifetime goal is to make a contribution towards making a difference in the lives of Ugandans, particularly those affected by HIV/AIDS, through involvement in research and research capacity building by training future researchers.

His immediate plans are to return to Uganda to continue working with the CDC to develop and evaluate HIV/AIDS prevention and care programs in Uganda.
Vincent Otieno Ojwang

obtained his MBChB from Moi University College of Health Sciences in Kenya. His first post was as a medical officer at Thika District Hospital, about 80 kilometers north of Nairobi. Thika is a busy district hospital with over 70% bed occupancy for infectious diseases like malaria, TB, HIV and AIDS-related complications in the general medical wards. Over half of the hospital's inpatients were admitted for HIV-related illnesses. He describes his early experiences:

"Imagine you are a fresh, youthful and energetic medical graduate, who finds himself managing patients who cannot afford to pay 30 Kenya Shillings (equal to approximately 50 cents US) for penicillin injections or amoxicillin capsules to treat pneumonia; if they do, it will mean foregoing their next three or four meals! Worse still, some of your in-patients may go on to contract communicable diseases such as pulmonary TB because they have been kept in the wards due to their inability to clear their medical bills amounting to under 1,000 Kenya Shillings (approximately $13 US) and the hospital has no isolation wards, so even patients with pulmonary TB are admitted in the general wards!"

After a year he was posted to a rural Catholic Mission Hospital in central Kenya as the medical officer in charge. He found that fewer than 10% of the hospital's 220 beds were occupied and learned the cause: "The local population could not afford the 1200 Kenya Shillings (approximately $15 US) daily inpatient charges at a private health facility.

After three months there, he was offered an opportunity to work for the Family AIDS Care and Education Services (FACES), a collaboration between UCSF and the Kenya Medical Research Institute. FACES is a PEPFAR funded program in prevention, care and treatment based in Nyanza and Nairobi Provinces. Having lost a parent to AIDS, Vincent jumped at the chance. As a medical officer and assistant program coordinator in Kisumu East District, he encountered many HIV-exposed and infected children, as well as AIDS orphans. Moved by their plight, he set up a play area and a football club for children and started a breakfast program to provide a nutritionally rich breakfast once a week to mitigate the nutritional challenges these children faced.

Before coming to Berkeley, he was the program coordinator for Migori District, a geographically vast area with a high HIV prevalence of 14.4%, where the majority of the population lives in abject poverty. Working with the Ministry of Health, the program aimed to decentralize prevention, care and treatment services from the overburdened, under-staffed central government health facilities to peripheral health centers, dispensaries and clinics, making treatment available to over 13,000 patients across 23 health facilities – all in three years. Vincent says his eyes were opened to the stark realities of the inadequacies of the Kenyan health care system.

Here, like in many other parts of the country, the public health sector suffers from frequent drug stock-outs and severe chronic staff shortages. He presented a poster at the International AIDS Conference in Mexico entitled, "Improving Enrollment and Retention of Youth into Care: An Experience from Kisumu, Kenya," and took home an important message: "The importance of simultaneously scaling up AIDS programs and strengthening health care systems in resource-limited countries. It affirmed his conviction that preventive medicine and effective quality care, particularly in the public sector, are fundamental to Kenya's health. He asked himself how he could help improve the health care system so that everyone, even a poor patient in a remote rural village, could walk into the nearest health facility and receive the needed treatment and care – where a patient with community-acquired pneumonia could get a penicillin injection at the nearest dispensary, where every pregnant woman could safely deliver her baby assisted by a qualified birth attendant, and where every premature neonate suffering from neonatal septicemia could get oxygen and antibiotic injections at a local health center.

He decided to come to Berkeley for an MPH to learn how to research the intricate relationships between HIV and other infectious diseases and advise policy makers on innovative health-care models in resource-limited settings.

His master's project is on identifying predictors of loss to follow up among HIV-infected youth accessing outpatient HIV services in Kisumu, Kenya. Social, outgoing and curious by nature, he says, "Upon completion of the master's program I intend to go back to Kenya to gain practical experience in research on HIV and other tropical infectious diseases, after which I hope to come back to Berkeley after two years for a Dr.PH!!"
Fred Collins Semitala

was in the second grade when his father was killed in a war in Uganda in 1983. He grew up in an orphanage. By working hard, he was able to gain admission to medical school and graduated from Makerere University with an MB.Ch.B.

After a one-year internship in internal medicine and OB/GYN in 2001, he joined Mulago Hospital AIDS Clinic as a volunteer Medical Officer and worked for eight months before he was recruited as a medical officer for the Infectious Disease (AIDS) Clinic. Fred served as Senior Medical Officer and study coordinator for a randomized five-year multi-center clinical trial from 2002 to 2004 and as a co-investigator for an ongoing HIV cohort study of 1,000 patients at Makerere University’s Infectious Diseases Institute. Meanwhile, as a volunteer physician at Ambassadors of Hope, Fred provided health services to orphans and vulnerable children. In 2004, he enrolled for postgraduate training (residence) in the Department of Internal Medicine to broaden his skills and knowledge in patient care and research. He completed the training in the minimum time of three years and was elected class leader during the first two years and chief resident in the final year.

After obtaining a masters degree in Internal Medicine, Fred advanced, becoming the Co-director of the Mulago ISS (HIV) Clinic under the Mulago-Mbarara Teaching Hospital’s Joint AIDS Program (MJAP) at Makerere University School of Medicine, where he led a team of clinicians and other health workers to provide care for over 9,000 HIV-positive patients. He developed patient care protocols, offered consultation services to clinicians in satellite HIV clinics, trained medical students, nursing students and graduate students in HIV/AIDS care, and initiated operational research.

Fred has presented to several key local and international HIV/AIDS conferences, contributed to five publications and written several case reports in his area of interest. His aspiration is to become a seasoned clinical researcher and trainer in infectious diseases with a focus on HIV treatment outcomes and the interactions between TB and HIV.

As a trainer, he knew that if he earned an MPH it would have an impact beyond his individual contribution and would add significantly to evidence-based care and training in Uganda, so he came to Berkeley. At Berkeley, his masters paper was on the effect of previous tuberculosis on response to antiretroviral therapy among HIV-infected Ugandans. He will be taking the knowledge and skills acquired to train more people and develop better research questions, and contribute to evidence-based care in Uganda; he hopes to pursue a PhD in Epidemiology.
CDC-Uganda currently has four UC Berkeley Fogarty Alumni in important staff positions:

Dr. Donna Kabatesi (MPH ’96), Branch Chief, Program Branch
Dr. Flora Banage (MPH ’06), Care and Treatment, Program Branch
Dr. Samuel Malamba (PhD ’07), Branch Chief, Informatics Branch
Dr. Jayne Byakika-Tusiime (PhD ’10), Operation Research Team Lead, Social Behavior Science Branch.

In addition, CDC employee Paul Ekwaru is completing his PhD program in Epidemiology at UCB (see Student Profile, page 2), and he is scheduled to return to Entebbe later this year to continue supporting CDC-Uganda program activities.

The Ugandan staff now working for CDC –Uganda represents a good example of how, over time, the UC Berkeley/UCSF AIDS International Training and Research Program (AITRP) has helped the country to build capacity to support and improve national health care programs.

AITRP has helped committed Ugandans to acquire the knowledge and receive the advanced specialized training and skills necessary to lead the implementation of evidence-based interventions to address the HIV epidemic in the region. This human resource development is intended to make the Ugandan staff efficient and effective and capable of initiating/implementing policies and running successful national programs. We provide technical assistance and support to the Ministry of Health and to more than 27 PEPFAR implementing partners working in the different parts of the country.

Currently, Uganda is in advanced stages of negotiating a new Fogarty-PEPFAR fellowship program. This program will provide qualified public health personnel to donor agencies and the Uganda Government Departments/Partners. This fellowship will target graduates, and, upon completion of the program, fellows will be re-integrated into the national system with the ability to work on solving health problems in the region. UC Berkeley Fogarty Alumni will also foster integration of returned fellows into existing alumni networks, professional associations, and international public health fora.

~ Samuel Malamba
Where Are They Now?

Updates on Fogarty Alumni from . . . .

Cote d’Ivoire

Gaston Djomand (MPH ‘96) is with the CDC in Atlanta, Georgia.

Rene Ekpini (MPH ‘99) is with UNICEF in New York and Senior Advisor to PMTCT Health Section.

Edith Boni-Ouattara (MPH ‘02) is a Reproductive Health Program Specialist with the United Nations Population Foundation.

Kenya

Maureen Momanyi Adudans (MPH ‘08) is a study coordinator and co-investigator at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) in Kisumu City.

Uganda

Moses Kamya (MPH ‘95) is Chairman of the Department of Medicine at Makerere University and co-head (with Phil Rosenthal of UCSF) of the Makerere University/UCSF Malaria Research Collaboration.

Zimbabwe

Samuel Gavi (MPH ‘08) is with the UZ-UCSF Collaborative Research Programme

Catherine Hoyo (MPH ‘90) is a Research Assistant Professor at Jirtle Laboratory at Duke University.

Rhoderick Machekano (MPH ‘03, PhD ‘06) is Assistant Professor of Medicine at Case Western Reserve University
Where Are They Now?

Since 2007 I have been working for the University of Alberta, Social Support Research Program. I was Project Coordinator for two research projects that focus on immigrant and refugee issues. In one of the projects, for instance, we designed and tested the feasibility, relevance and acceptability of a support intervention for refugees who have been in Canada for less than ten years. The objective of the second study was to examine the social support needs of African refugee (including asylum seekers) new parents who recently experienced the birth of a new baby in Canada, and the implications for support interventions that enhance the mental health of both parents and children. My work with the latter study is ongoing.

Beginning January 2010 I took up a position as Support and Outreach Coordinator for The HIV Network of Edmonton Society (HIV Edmonton). In this position, I coordinate a team that provides HIV specific support and outreach to people living with HIV as well as coordinate harm reduction and prevention education to people at risk of HIV infection.

~ Knox Makumbe (MPH ‘07)

Did you know?

Tarande Manzilla (MPH ‘95) originally from Congo, is now the Niger World Health Organization representative.

I’m currently in Atlanta, Georgia, with CDC. However, I’m quite worried about my family back home in Ivory Coast. As far as my current position and duties, I’m now the unit lead for Serologic Diagnostics in the International Laboratory Branch of the Global AIDS program (GAP). I manage a team of 5 people.

The primary goal of my unit is to ensure the quality of HIV testing performed in PEPFAR-supported countries (+40 countries) and GAP countries (+70 countries). Among other activities, my team and I

- Strengthen the lab quality management system to maintain our CAP accreditation
- Conduct validation/evaluation of new HIV test kits to be used in PEPFAR countries
- Provide technical assistance (in person or remotely) for training and implementation of quality assurance programs in the field
- Serve as members of the CDC and WHO-HQ and WHO-AFRO technical working group for HIV testing
- Serve as country lab liaison for Mali, Rwanda, Senegal and Ghana

Thanks a lot for thinking about the Fogarty alumni from Cote d’Ivoire!

~ Mireille Kalou Badirou (MPH ‘03)
Where Are They Now?

Hello from South Africa!

It’s been almost four years since I left UC Berkeley. My daughter, born three weeks after graduation, is a constant reminder of the year Sabastian and I spent at Berkeley. She is a reminder of the many good things that happened to us during that year and of how much our lives changed so much during that year.

When we left Berkeley in 2007, we returned to Zimbabwe. I taught epidemiology in the Department of Community Medicine at the University of Zimbabwe College Of Health Sciences.

I left in April 2008 to join my husband, who was moving to Cape Town, South Africa for work. I spent the following year at home, taking care of my family and trying to figure out which direction to take with respect to my career.

In 2009, I joined the Aurum Institute in Johannesburg, South Africa as a Research Scientist/ Epidemiologist. My area of focus is the epidemiology and prevention of HIV-associated TB. During the next year I plan to enroll for a PhD with the University of Amsterdam. In the coming years, I hope to continue applying for and obtaining grant funding for meaningful research that will have an impact on policy, practice and control of TB and HIV. I also hope to write and publish relevant papers in the process. I am grateful for the training I received at Berkeley and for how much that training prepared me for work that I am doing and for where I am going.

~ Tendesayi Kufa-Chakezha, (MPH ’07)

Below: Tendesayi’s daughter, Ropafadzo, as a mouse in the school play (left) and as a fairy (right).
2011 Summer Scholars

Again this year we will welcome summer scholars from several countries to attend the second six-week session (July 5 to August 12) and take introductory epidemiology and biostatistics courses.

Last summer, we had visitors sponsored by PEPFAR from Ivory Coast and Viet Nam (see Issue #8 article).

This year we will host 19 summer scholars from Brazil (non-AITRP), Kenya, Uganda, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

Summer scholars will again have the benefit of instruction and supervision by special liaison Dr. Phuong Ngoc Pham. Dr. Pham is Director of Research at the UC Berkeley Human Rights Center and Adjunct Associate Professor at Tulane University’s Payson Center for Human Development, where she has had considerable experience mentoring international students.

Details about attendees will be published in this fall’s Issue #10. As in years past, scholars will arrive in late June and begin classes right after the Independence Day holiday. There will be a kick-off dinner party at Art’s house, special lectures on monitoring and evaluation by Alice Gandelman of the California State Department of Public Health, one or more site visits, and, before the scholars depart in mid-August, the ever popular shopping opportunity, always a favorite fun activity. The summer will end with a farewell party at Art’s vacation home in Sonoma County; shuttles for scholars will be provided for the long, scenic ride!
News from All Over

From Peru to Botswana

I am still in Botswana but now also working in South Africa. My primary responsibilities are assisting the brand new School of Medicine at the University of Botswana (the first one in the country) with the development of their curricula and training in Internal Medicine and research/public health. I work closely with the Government (particularly with the Botswana TB Programme) and provide help and input when they need me. My research activities are focused on TB, TB/HIV co-infection and TB transmission, but I am also doing a bit of work on HPV and Women's Health.

I recently got my first NIH-funded R01 and two R21s that will keep me busy for the next few years. As you can tell, I am doing a bit of everything... which I like because it keeps me busy and interested (and constantly challenged).

~ Nicola Zetola (MPH ‘08)