



Summary Notes of the Third EMBLEM Update and Scientific Meeting at Lacor in Gulu, Uganda September 6-7, 2016

Completed successfully on Wednesday, September 7th was the third update and scientific meeting of the EMBLEM project, held in at the Lacor/Saint Mary's Hospital in Gulu, Uganda. In attendance for this meeting were 75 persons, representing the EMBLEM study site staff in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, faculty and staff from Lacor Hospital, as well as physicians, scientists, management and support personnel from Makerere University, the Uganda Cancer Institute, Gulu University, AFENET, local government officials, and community advisory board (CAB) members. Also in attendance were physicians, scientists, and research professionals from Brazil, Italy, and the United States representing the National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute, the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke, the Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center, the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, the University of Nebraska, Johns Hopkins University, the Universidade Federal de Minas (Gerais, Brazil), the University of Rome (Sapienza), Leidos Biomedical Research, the Kenya Medical Research Institute, Moi University, and Westat.

The primary purpose of the third status and scientific meeting for EMBLEM was to review the disease process, including the genomics methods, pathology in the research on Burkitt Lymphoma (BL), and treatment and prevention of BL. Recurring themes of these presentations included the need to enhance diagnostic capabilities for BL, as well as the need for ongoing collaborations that could contribute to reducing morbidity and mortality of this disease. Also of great interest to all speakers and participants was to hear some of the preliminary findings for the EMBLEM study, as presented by the EMBLEM Principal Investigator Dr. Sam Mbulaiteye. In addition to the scientific sessions on BL and other important infections facing children in East Africa, also included was an interactive session on the training of [new] principal investigators in order that the study of BL research in Africa continues. The plenary presentation for the session on the 'Sustainability of BL Research in Africa' was delivered by Dr. Nelson Sewankambo, Professor Emeritus of Makerere University. He emphasized the hard work needed in order to do medical research in Africa, the accountability required, the importance of mentoring, and the absolute need to publish one's work.

The EMBLEM meeting in Gulu provided an essential opportunity for networking among the multi-disciplinary professionals and lay persons present. These conversations are certain to lead to additional collaborations and opportunities for training/teaching and ongoing research. The first five-year study phase for EMBLEM is drawing to a close, and the site staff members are now focused on study close out. Investigators spoke of the infrastructure accomplished in this short time at the six EMBLEM sites, though more work is needed. The next phase for EMBLEM may be smaller in scope and will include some changes in the current leadership at some of the sites. Until then, the EMBLEM community will be focused on upcoming publications as well as presentations at upcoming scientific meetings in East Africa, the US, and China.