



EMBLEM Newsletter

A monthly means to inform and inspire our TEAM

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PI Orientation Program for EMBLEM

To support research career development for junior African researchers associated with the National Cancer Institute (NCI) study, “Epidemiology of Burkitt Lymphoma in East-African Children and Minors (EMBLEM),” the Fogarty International Center (FIC) joined with NCI to develop an innovative, two-part Principal Investigators (PI) orientation program to be implemented within African research institutions and led by successful senior African scientists. The first part was a half day Principal Investigator (PI) Workshop held on September 24, 2014 in Kisumu, Kenya to orient senior researchers (as mentors) and junior researchers (as mentees) from six institutions collaborating with EMBLEM in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Five well-established African researchers from Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda and South Africa led the workshop by sharing their experience on the road to succeeding as African researchers with international collaboration. They provided participants with practical information about the multiple responsibilities of a PI in Africa, how to develop successful international collaborations in a competitive environment, and how to obtain research funding support for their ideas.

To consolidate and focus information gained from the first part of the PI orientation, the second part of the program solicited applications from teams of paired (senior-junior) investigators from an EMBLEM study site for an intensive two-week “hands-on” experience at the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA) in Durban South Africa, where one of the course facilitators is based. Working with experienced scientists at CAPRISA, the East African scientists will be taken from A to Z in developing a research career path using their own examples and relating them to opportunities in EMBLEM following a model CAPRISA has successfully used for several other groups in central and southern Africa, the Middle East, and China. The “paired teams” will get a hands-on experience on all of the elements included in a more didactic workshop (week one) and spend a second week in an area of their interests (clinical trials, lab, etc.) with CAPRISA staff. They will explore ways to tie into the NIH research and FIC training opportunities, how to build capacity strategically and explore how other local opportunities can be used, based upon the very successful CAPRISA experience. One of the desired end results for each team will be the development of the concept that was included as part of the junior investigator’s initial application and can be submitted for a funding opportunity announcement as part of the junior team member’s career development plan. In addition, junior investigators will be expected to have an improved career development plan and the senior investigators would be expected to have better strategies for supporting the research career advancement for the junior team member.

- Jeanne McDermott –Guest Editor

EMBLEM UGANDA

To date, a total of 643 (240 females, 403 males) cases have been screened. Of those, 343 (53%) were found eligible and enrolled (126 females, 217 males). Matched population control enrollment figures stand at 1037 children, pilot population controls and HC II controls figures stand 950 and 184 children, respectively.

Appreciation goes to the community, field team, community research assistants, community advisory members, the Ministry of Health and all other collaborating partners that have worked hard to see to this achievement.

EMBLEM KENYA

In the month of April 2015, 6 cases (5 males, 1 female) were spotted, bringing the total to 532 (338 males, 194 females) spotted. All the cases spotted in April were eligible and enrolled, bringing the total to 212 eligible and enrolled (151 males, 61 females).



Matched population control enrollment has been completed in seven of 100 randomly selected villages in Kenya, yielding 94 (46 males, 48 females) participants. The field work has been marred by heavy rains and associated complications such as the vehicle getting stuck (see photo above).

EMBLEM TANZANIA

In April EMBLEM Tanzania spotted 3 new cases bringing the total number of cases spotted to 447 (248 males, 199 females). All three cases were eligible and got enrolled in the study. The total number of cases enrolled stands at 109 (62 males, 47 females).

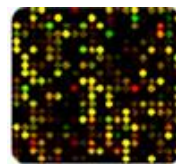


Dr. Sam met Dr. Makorere to discuss work in Tanzania

Mr. Hillary (lab), Herry (data) and Bonny (driver) from Tanzania joined the Kenyan team for a 2 day field trip for MPC enrollment to learn from the Kenyan experience. During April, Dr. Sam visited Tanzania and met with key staff from collaborating institutions, including Dr. Makorere (photo at left) who was supported by EMBLEM to learn ultrasound-guided biopsy techniques at Lacor in Uganda.

EMBLEM GOALS

To answer its scientific question: whether malaria infection is more likely in children with BL compared to healthy children of a similar age and sex living in the same community, EMBLEM staff tests cases and controls for malaria in the field using 3 methods (thin and thick smears and rapid diagnostic tests). The samples will also be tested in the US using proteome and genomic tests, bringing the number of tests used to 5 (photo below). Together, the results will enable EMBLEM scientists to answer the question, and could provide new tools to screen, diagnose, or treat BL in Africa.



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