

## EMBLEM – Opening Inroads for Funded Health Research in Africa



Africa map from the Lancet publication showing research sites in sub Saharan Africa

In July 2013, The Lancet published a directory of International Biomedical Research Organizations Support – a database of sites on the African continent where funded medical and health research is taking place:

<http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X%2813%2970012-3/fulltext>. This database

includes information on the funders and the host recipients or collaborators. Review of this database reveals the contribution of EMBLEM. At most of the six sites where EMBLEM is being conducted, it was the only funded study at the site, highlighting the role EMBLEM is playing in identifying gaps and opportunities for research in Africa. This has necessitated a significant investment in basic research infrastructure and training of personnel in order to conduct high-quality research in rural areas. This pioneering work of EMBLEM is unprecedented. For example, EMBLEM has been collecting fresh-frozen

tissues from Burkitt Lymphoma (BL) patients at St. Mary's Lacor Hospital in Uganda. EMBLEM investigators are proud to be part of the funded global biomedical research partnership.

*Dr. Esther Kawira, editor*

## EMBLEM UGANDA

A total of 384 (140 female and 244 male) potential cases have been spotted. After screening, 189 (72 female and 117 male) were eligible, consented and enrolled.

The team also commenced enrolling matched controls starting in the north central region in Uganda in Apac district. A total of 88 (32 female and 56 male) controls were enrolled in August matching to 44 cases expected from the region. An additional 23 children will be enrolled in Apac in September.

One strategy to improve community response and increase awareness about the study is to provide regular updates to the Community Advisory Board (CAB). The EMBLEM team met 20 members of the joint north central and west Nile regions CAB in Adjumani on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The CAB received a status update on case and control enrollment and provided a feedback from the community. The community continues to appreciate efforts of the EMBLEM team to increase BL awareness in the northern region and to improve access to diagnosis, treatment and research. The meeting was also attended by the Assistant District Health Officer (DHO) of Adjumani who promised more involvement in activities fostering BL awareness in Adjumani district. The EMBLEM



Members of the CAB in a meeting

team also organized a one day training workshop at Kuluva Hospital to sensitize hospital staff on EMBLEM activities in Kuluva and Arua as a whole.

## EMBLEM KENYA

A total of 219 (86 female and 133 male) potential cases have been spotted. After screening, 73 (23 female and 50 male) were eligible, consented and enrolled. In July, EMBLEM Kenya enrolled the highest number of cases, which was higher than the historical rates for the first time. EMBLEM will start case enrollment at the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Training and Referral Hospital (JOOTRH) in September. We welcome Ms. Pamela Omollo who will be in charge of work at that site and Dr. Juliana Otieno, Chief Executive Officer at JOOTRH, who joins the EMBLEM Steering Committee.

The team will intensify patient outreach activities to outpatient departments and the use of phone calls and short text messages to spotters in peripheral health facilities and the community.

## EMBLEM TANZANIA

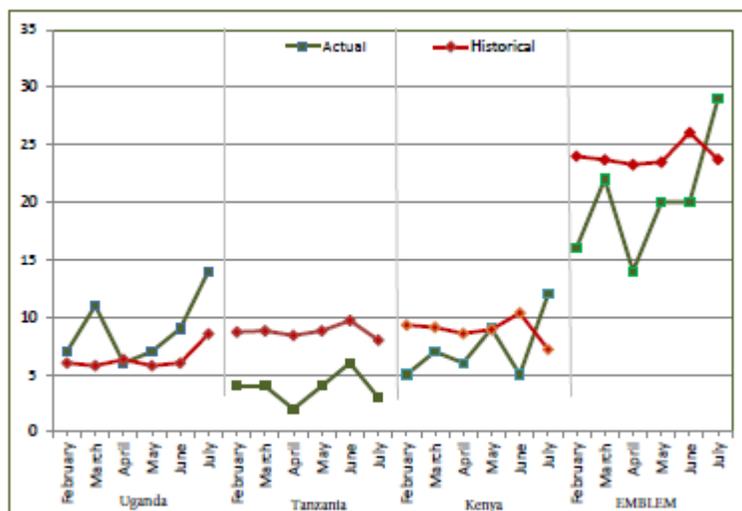
A total of 269 potential cases (120 female and 149 male) have been spotted and screened in Tanzania of whom 49 were eligible and 48 were enrolled (22 female and 26 male).

The team is continuing with hospital re-sensitization visits to health facilities within the study region. This goes together with distribution of posters and the newly printed EMBLEM brochures from WESTAT.

The recruitment of a Senior Technical Supervisor is ongoing. The job was advertised in national and local newspapers and also distributed to medical institutions (hospitals, universities and research institutions) throughout the country. Several applications have been received so far. The deadline for application is August 31st, to be soon followed by short listing and interviewing which will be coordinated by the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) –Mwanza.

## EMBLEM GOALS

EMBLEM monitors the actual BL accrual rates against historical rates averaged over the 10 years prior to EMBLEM commencement (graph at right shows trends from February through July 2013). Uganda consistently accrued cases above historical rates. Tanzania accrued cases below historical rates. Kenya accrual is inching above historical rates. Overall, EMBLEM at all sites is inching above historical rates. This information helps the teams review their fieldwork strategies.



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