



## EMBLEM Newsletter

*A monthly means to inform and inspire our TEAM*

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### The Burkitt's Lymphoma Workshop

"All these brains and they're all working on 'our' problem!" As I spoke for Africa, I remembered hearing past accusations against western medical researchers, that "they" (people in the West) are only interested in their own diseases, like heart disease and lung cancer. This meeting was evidence to the contrary. There are some cases of BL in high-resource countries, but most of the BL burden exists in sub-Saharan Africa, in areas with malaria.

It was a revelation to me to see almost 100 people gathered in Philadelphia on July 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> to present and discuss current research on BL, ranging from epidemiology – who, where, when, why BL develops; pathogenesis – how BL develops; prevention, treatment, care, and capacity building. The meeting was sponsored by the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Center for Global Health and chaired by the center head, Dr. Edward Trimble. The head of NCI, Nobel Laureate, Dr. Harold Varmus, attended the entire meeting. It was a rare honor for EMBLEM principal investigators, including Drs. Sam Mbulaiteye, Martin Ogwang, Esther Kawira, and Peter Odada from Kenya to participate and share their experience and vision for BL in Africa.



**Dr. Harold Varmus, Director, NCI**



**Dr. John L. Ziegler, UCSF**

Among the presenters was the first Director of the Uganda Cancer Institute, veteran BL researcher John Ziegler. Dr. Ziegler described the seminal contribution of BL to scientific knowledge. In subsequent presentations, it was clear that the progress that was made in Africa in the 60's and 70's was lost as political, economic and civil disturbance engulfed most countries. Sadly, most children with BL in Africa continue to needlessly die. It is apparent that many under-equipped rural hospitals continue to "provide care under adverse conditions".

The meeting also brought a glimmer of hope for BL. Medical research, albeit in the West, has identified better methods to diagnose, treat and support care of BL. Further improvements in treatment are possible, for example, using genetic changes to target treatment. With new emphasis on BL by NCI and a new focus on training and empowering local health personnel, EMBLEM stands at a crossroads as a pioneer in "public health through science".

*Dr. Esther Kawira - Editor*



**EMBLEM PI's and others contribute to discussion**

## EMBLEM KENYA

EMBLEM Kenya has spotted 68 cases, 16 of which were BL. Eight (6 males, 2 females) have been enrolled in the study. Five were not eligible and 3 died before enrollment.

Community mobilization is continuing as medical education, which was attended by health care providers, community health workers and community members during cervical and breast cancers screening, was conducted in Homa bay district hospital. EMBLEM posters were also distributed during a door to door polio immunization campaign in Homa bay district. Sensitization of health care providers was conducted in Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital Oncology department and Division of Pediatrics with BL posters being put up in various departments, sick child clinics, special clinics and pediatric wards. The Laboratory at Homa bay received laboratory supplies from Biolabs Africa LTD.

## EMBLEM UGANDA



Dr. Aldo Pariyo examining histology slides at pathology laboratory in Lacor

Case enrollment at Lacor Hospital study site continues with current enrollment figures at 83 (28 females, 55 males). At Kuluva Hospital, study site enrollment figures stand at a total of 14 (3 females, 11 males).

EMBLEM has successfully completed one week of training for Dr. Aldo Pariyo a physician from Kuluva to better manage the ever-increasing number of Burkitt's cases at Kuluva following the official launch of the site.

The end of July saw the successful conclusion of control enrollment in Orapi Village. A total of 92 pilot controls were enrolled (45 females, 47 males). Health Centre II controls had a total of 14 (9 females, 5 males).

## EMBLEM TANZANIA

On August 24th, the first Community Advisory Board (CAB) meeting for EMBLEM Tanzania was held in Mwanza. Five of the seven chosen members attended. After touring the EMBLEM office, labs, and wards at Bugando Medical Center, the group met for orientation on the duties of the CAB and to meet the EMBLEM study staff. The current CAB members were charged with nominating additional persons for a total of ten CAB members. Chosen as temporary chair of the CAB was Dr. John Chungalucha of NIMR, Mwanza.



L to R Dr. Nestory Masalu with CAB members Dr. Makwami and father Aloys Temu



The laboratory at the Shirati site received a freezer, hood, centrifuge, and QBC machine, as well as completing the renovation of counters and cabinets. Seven cases (3 males, 4 females) have now been enrolled in Tanzania.

L to R Dr. Chungalucha(CAB member), Dr. Masalu, Capt. Magatti, Father Aloys(CAB member), Dr. Makwami(CAB Member) and Dr. Esther. Standing in front of the group is Dr. Kahima.

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