

Research Partnership for the Control of Chronic Diseases in Africa (RESPOND-AFRICA)

COVID-19

Uganda and Tanzania have been tackling another wave of infections. This has disrupted our activities in clinics and follow-up of study participants in existing studies and delayed the start of new studies. We are talking regularly and trying to support each other as best we can during this time. Most of our colleagues in Uganda are now vaccinated with at least one dose and a batch of Johnson and Johnson vaccines have arrived in Tanzania.

RESEARCH STUDIES

NIHR-funded META Phase 2 trial: This should finish within the next month or so. Overall, 85% of the original cohort attended at 6 months and we estimate about 80% will complete 12 months.

The statistical analysis plan has been circulated for final comment and we are almost ready to do the analyses once the code is broken. Sokoine, Anu and Katie have prepared a draft of the main paper.

The Tanzania META team during training for the phase 3 trial.



EDCTP-funded META Phase 3 trial: We are still waiting approval from the Tanzania Medicines & Medical Devices Authority. Staff are currently being trained in the use of the Electronic Data Capture system. Standard Operating Procedures and patient information leaflets are ready.

We met with Dr Uzman Alam, a consultant diabetologist at the University of Liverpool, with a special interest in diabetes complications and will soon start exploring potential studies together.

The photos below show placebo arriving in Tanzania and being processed by Prof Mfinanga and colleagues.



Medicine bottles being transported to NIMR.



The placebos ready to be repackaged into bottles.

Research Partnership for the Control of Chronic Diseases in Africa (RESPOND-AFRICA)

The placebo having cleared customs at Dar Es Salaam airport and ready for transport to NIMR.



Pharmacists from the central pharmacy unpacking the placebo into bottles. A race against time as the placebo needed to be unpacked within days before expiry.



INTE-AFRICA trial: Recruitment was completed on 1 April 2021 with 7047 patients enrolled at the 32 health facilities. Because of Covid-19, we began enrolment in July 2020, 4 months after schedule and took 3 months longer than anticipated.

The first participants enrolled on the trial have now started to complete 12-months follow up and have left the study.

The research teams in Uganda and Tanzania have been meeting regularly and conducting training and discussions (e.g. to address potential challenges to implementing the protocol).

Overseen by Prof Mfinanga, INTE-AFRICA staff practise using a hemocue machine as part of 2-day training in Tanzania.



The INTE-AFRICA team in Uganda reviewing procedures for participants leaving the trial after completion of follow-up.



Research Partnership for the Control of Chronic Diseases in Africa (RESPOND-AFRICA)

INTE-COMM trial and research programme: Shabbar's visit to Uganda in May 2021 was for the team, led by Moffat, to engage with stakeholders including the policy-makers. In early June, extensive engagement was done by Prof Mfinanga in Tanzania. A scoping review has been done. The protocol is near ready for submission to ethics. We have also planned further PhD programmes, which will be advertised.

INTE-COMM stakeholder engagement. Dr Gerald Mutungi (Head of the National NCDs Control Programme, Uganda) presenting at the NIHR Group's Uganda National Steering Committee on 6 May 2021.



Management of Chronic Conditions in Africa (MOCCA). We are following up patients who were part of MOCCA (our original pilot of integrated management of HIV, diabetes and hypertension) to assess patient outcomes now and for example, identify how many had undiagnosed chronic conditions.

Erik, Katie, Anu, Sokoine, Anna and Mohamed discussing the Matipio study.



MATIPIO - The Mapitio study is a retrospective cohort study comprising adult patients living with HIV who presented to the Hindu Mandal hospital in Dar es Salaam, between 2010 and 2014. Data from over 700 patients have been extracted and a further 200 remain. Dr Mohamed Zahir is managing the study, alongside Prof Kaushik and Anna Jazz (a new Research Assistant at Hindu Mandal), Katie, Anu, Erik and Sokoine.

Research Partnership for the Control of Chronic Diseases in Africa (RESPOND-AFRICA)

Capacity Strengthening

PhDs and Masters:

Josephine has now applied for a PhD at LSTM and Sokoine and Anu should be registering in the next month or so.

Kenneth Mugisha (from TASO) is starting a PhD through Makerere University with scholarship from the INTE-COMM programme. His primary supervisor is Prof David Guwatudde, with Moffat and Shabbar providing some co-supervision.

Erik has completed the first year of his online MSc in Epidemiology through LSHTM.

Short Courses:

Joseph and Anu have been accepted on the LSHTM Advanced Epidemiological Analysis short course, starting in September, with 50% funding from LSTM core funds.

Institutional capacity building:

Hindu Mandal and NIMR continue to work towards Good Financial Grants Practice (GFGP) bronze awards supported through NIHR funding. Across our African partners we are seeing improvements in grant monitoring and thank the finance and research contracts teams in MRC Uganda, TASO, NIMR and Hindu Mandal for their continued efforts.

Training in Process Evaluation:

Training was conducted with the social science teams in Uganda and Tanzania in April and June 2021. This included talks by Profs Marie Claire van Hout and Max Bachmann and Dr Jamie Murdoch around the approach to interviews, on data collection instruments and how to elicit responses to different questions with consideration of the conceptual frameworks.

Virtual training with the Tanzania team on process evaluation, June 2021



We would like to welcome the new researchers in Uganda who will be conducting the social science study - Mathias Akugizibwe and Maureen Chaka Namulundu; and in Tanzania - Mtumwa Bakari, Doris Mbata and Zenais Kiwale.

Research Partnership for the Control of Chronic Diseases in Africa (RESPOND-AFRICA)

NEW PAPERS AND GRANTS

Birungi J, Kivuyo S, Garrib A et al **“Integrating health services for HIV-infection, diabetes and hypertension in sub Saharan Africa: a cohort study.”** Submitted to BMJ Open.



Mfinanga S, Nyirenda M, Mutungi G et al **“Integrating HIV, diabetes and hypertension services in Africa: study protocol for a cluster-randomised trial in Tanzania and Uganda.”** Submitted to BMJ Open. We have done one round of revisions.

Shiri T, Birungi J, Garrib A et al **“Integrated HIV, diabetes, and hypertension ambulatory health services in low-income settings: an empirical socio-economic cohort study in Tanzania and Uganda.** BMC Medicine in press.

Jaffar S, Ramaiya K, Karekezi C, Sewankambo S et al. **“Controlling diabetes and hypertension in sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons from HIV programmes.”** The Lancet, accepted (commentary).

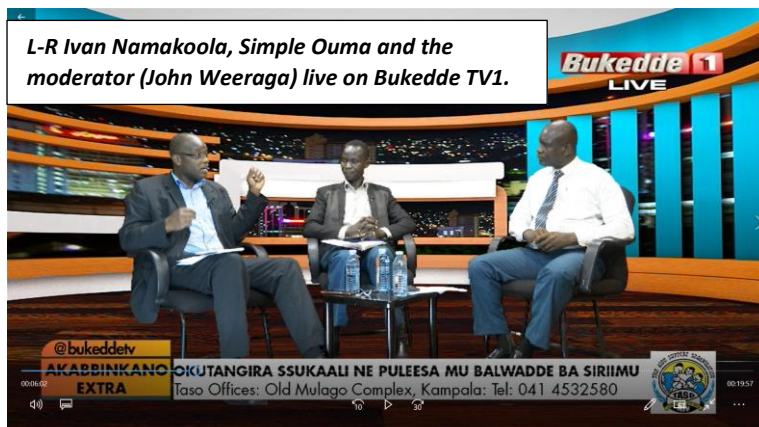
NIHR Global Health Policy and Systems Research - Researcher-led call

Profs Kaushik and Mbanya are leading an application with colleagues in Tanzania, Cameroon and UK for this call, focusing on access to essential medicine and products for diabetes and hypertension. The application deadline is 4th August.

We have heard that our applications to NIHR for a Centre for Non-Communicable Diseases and for another Global Health Group award were both unsuccessful.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & INVOLVEMENT

As part of our NIHR funding for community engagement, The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO) are running a programme of engagement and communications including production of a short film, drama skits and panel discussions about our research and real-life stories about living with HIV, diabetes and hypertension. In April, Dr Ivan Namakoola (Research Scientist at Uganda Virus Research Unit) and Dr Simple Ouma (Study Coordinator for INTE-AFRICA) were interviewed in a health talk show on Bukedde TV1 and Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) Radio Red 98.0 FM highlighting the work of our partnership and answering questions from the public.



Research Partnership for the Control of Chronic Diseases in Africa (RESPOND-AFRICA)



“Talking Heads”

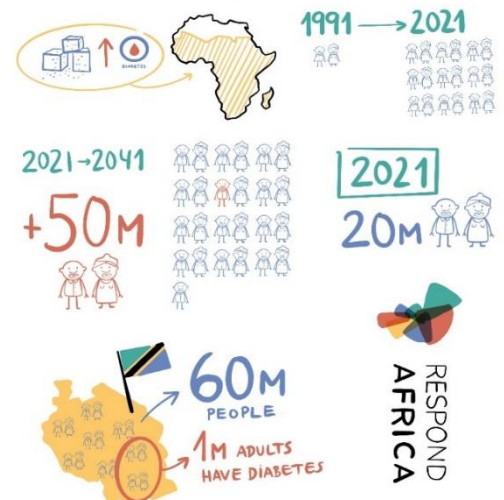
Whilst in Uganda for her PHD, Camila (IS Global) coordinated a series of “talking head” videos with Moffat and Josephine which will be used on our website. Josephine talked about how she got into research and the specific challenges of being a woman in research. Moffat outlined his vision for the future of NCD research for RESPOND-Africa. The clips are going through final edits and will be shared shortly.



META animated film

In Tanzania we are in final stages of drafting the script for a short, animated film on the META Phase 3 trial. This will sit alongside other communications materials to explain the aims of the metformin trial.

Early design ideas for animated film for META 3 trial



Research Partnership for the Control of Chronic Diseases in Africa (RESPOND-AFRICA)

PPE for healthcare facilities.

Earlier this year LSTM launched the 'Bump it Forward' campaign, to raise money for PPE for health care workers in sub-Saharan Africa. In March, our partners MRC/UVRI & LSHTM, Uganda and NIMR, Tanzania were awarded £29,000 and £20,000 respectively to procure PPE across health care facilities.



The team arranging delivery of hand sanitiser in Tanzania



PPE being received in one of our Uganda facilities

HR UPDATE

We have been unsuccessful in appointing to the statistician and health economist posts. To provide support in the interim we are delighted to welcome two new colleagues to the team.



Huanyuan Luo is a PHD student at LSTM under the supervision of Prof Duolao Wang. Huanyuan will provide statistics support to our studies, especially META, for 2 days per week over the next 6 months.



Caroline Jeffery, who currently works in LSTM, will provide additional statistics support as well as support to health economics, starting 19 July for 6 months.

Welcome Huanyuan and Caroline!

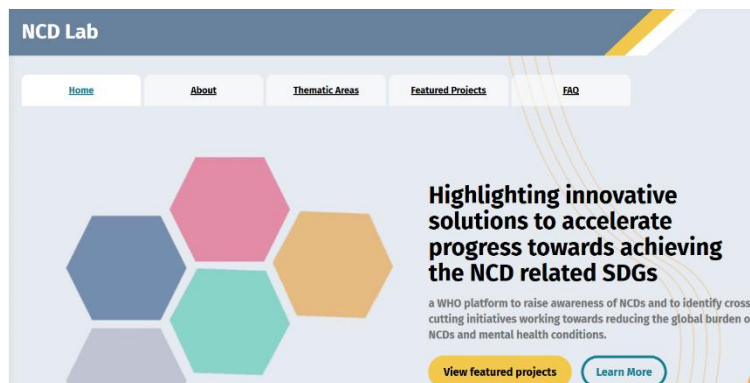
Research Partnership for the Control of Chronic Diseases in Africa (RESPOND-AFRICA)

AWARDS

Times Higher Education Annual Awards

RESPOND-Africa was chosen as LSTM's entry for International Collaboration of the Year. Thanks to contributions from across the partnership, we submitted our proposal in mid-June and expect to hear the outcome in early September.

WHO Non-Communicable Disease Lab



The INTE-COMM project was shortlisted for inclusion to the World Health Organization Non-Communicable Disease Lab under the 'meaningful engagement of people living with NCD' thematic area. For more information see https://www.knowledge-action-portal.com/en/ncd_lab



This research was commissioned by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) using UK aid from the UK Government. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.



This project is part of the EDCTP2 programme supported by the European Union.



The INTE-AFRICA project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 825698.