

# INTEGRATED HIV/HTN NEWSLETTER

LEVERAGING THE HIV PLATFORM FOR HYPERTENSION CONTROL IN UGANDA.

March-August 2023



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### Welcome remarks from the Principal Investigator, PI

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Issue 2, Volume 1 of our newsletter. This newsletter serves as a platform to provide project updates and share highlights of our progress thus far. In this issue, we have exciting updates to share from various key events and activities.

I would like to take a moment to express my deepest appreciation to Professor Heiner Grosskurth, who has been an invaluable member of our team. I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for his unwavering dedication and wish him a fulfilling retirement.

As we move forward, I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome Dr Saidi Kapiga to the Integrated HIV/HTN team. With his impressive background in HIV and HTN research, as well as his strong dedication to providing comprehensive care, we are thrilled to have him join our team.

I wish to highlight the remarkable progress we have made during this year. The dedication and commitment shown by each and everyone of you has been instrumental in achieving positive outcomes. As we continue our journey together, let us remain focused, determined, and proactive in our efforts. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

**Principal Investigator, Jane Kabami**



# PROJECT UPDATES

## BASELINE AND 12 MONTH RESULTS PRESENTED

AT THE HLB-SIMPLE ALLIANCE

Jane Kabami, the Principal Investigator of the Integrated HIV/HTN Project, recently presented the project's baseline results at the HLB-SIMPLE Alliance Meeting. The meeting aimed to discuss strategies to strengthen the HLB SIMPLE Alliance. Speakers from various organisations shared their experiences investing in the alliance to improve patients' health with complex diseases like hypertension in low-and middle-income countries.

This meeting was a significant milestone in the Integrated HIV/HTN project's journey. Since the project's launch, Ms. Kabami has been at the forefront of its implementation. Her leadership, expertise, and passion for improving health outcomes in Uganda have been instrumental in driving the project forward.



P.I Jane Kabami presenting at the HLB-SIMPLE Alliance Meeting

“One of the things we have done is providing training to the health workers so that they are able to provide health education to the patients. Overall, we have seen that patients’ with dual diagnosis (HIV and hypertensive) in care increased dramatically from baseline to month-12 with only 24 patients across all 26 health centers at baseline to 450 at month-12. Among these participants, hypertension control has improved but we still have a lot of work to do.” Jane Kabami, Principal Investigator, Integrated HIV/HTN.



The HLB-SIMPLE Alliance Meeting Attendees

### Key Highlights

- 1. Integration of HTN in HIV care delivery systems is feasible
- 2. Our intervention improved HTN screening, treatment, and control between baseline and 12-months
- 3. Innovative strategies are still needed to achieve optimal blood pressure control



# PROJECT UPDATES

## UGANDA HEART INSTITUTE REFRESHER TRAINING

The Uganda Heart Institute (UHI) empowered healthcare professionals with a refresher training program that provided healthcare workers with the necessary tools and resources to provide comprehensive care. The program focused on essential topics, including managing HIV and hypertension co-infection, patient communication, and clinical practices. This aspect is crucial, as co-infection poses unique challenges requiring specialised knowledge and skill. Healthcare workers were equipped with the latest research and best practices to enhance their ability to provide optimal care for patients with HIV and hypertension. Moreover, the training program emphasised the importance of current clinical practices. Trainees received hands-on training and were updated on the latest diagnostic and treatment protocols.



Trainees at the UHI Refresher Training

The UHI refresher training undoubtedly made a significant impact on the healthcare landscape. By empowering trainees with the necessary knowledge and skills, UHI is ensuring that patients receive the highest standard of care possible

“IDRC has been the first implementing partner, that actually came on board and integrated HIV/HTN services here in Kamwenge District. IDRC has built capacity to both health workers and peers through refresher trainings, and one of the best practices. It keeps on encouraging the HIV/HTN clients to form the patient clubs to start saving affordable amount of money for sustainable dispensing/supply of HTN drugs so as to achieve blood pressure control. It was also identified that HIV/HTN screening has also reduced mortality rates among HIV clients. Also during the training, there was the display of our performance data and this gave us an insight on how to improve our performance by copying from other healthy facilities their best practices to achieve the best results.” Tumusiime Vincent from Rwamwanja HCIII.



Dr Brian Twinamatsiko presenting at the UHI Refresher Training

### Key Highlights

- 1.Capacity building provided to healthworkers and peers through refresher training.
- 2.Hands-on training on up-to-date clinical practices for evidence based care.
- 3.Managing HIV and hypertension co-infection with latest research and best practices.
- 4.Effective patient communication
- 5.Testimonial from healthcare professional that attended the refresher training



# PROJECT UPDATES

## THE INTEGRATED HIV/HTN CONSORTIUM MEETING

MARCH 2023

The Integrated HIV/HTN Consortium Meeting was held at the Infectious Diseases Research Collaboration (IDRC) Nakasero Office. The aim of the meeting was to bring together collaborators; IDRC, Ministry of Health of Uganda (MoH), Uganda Heart Institute (UHI), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and Makerere University who are involved in the Integrated HIV and hypertension project to discuss and review progress made towards achieving the project objectives. The meeting began with opening remarks from the principal investigator, Ms. Jane Kabami, who highlighted the importance of addressing the burden of HIV and hypertension in Uganda and the progress made thus far. The consortium members then gave updates on their respective tasks, highlighting successes, challenges encountered and proposed solutions. The meeting covered issues such as HIV hypertension management, consortium operations research methodology, and ethical considerations. Members of the consortium engaged in conversations, producing new solutions to problems.



### Members attending the Integrated HIV/HTN Consortium Meeting

The conference produced an action plan with specific goals, actions, and dates. The consortium stated its support for the initiative and its good impact on Ugandans living with HIV and hypertension. A dinner celebration was arranged in honor of Professor Heiner Grosskurth, who is retiring from his position, as a fitting homage to his groundbreaking HIV and HTN research.

“On behalf of IDRC we welcome the consortium members to this meeting. We are so proud of this consortium and the achievements it has made. We started this project under harsh conditions of covid-19 but we were able to put up SOPs that allowed us to continue working safely and continue working towards achieving the project objectives. We really look forward to the discussions on how we are going to continue delivering in Year 4.” Ms. Catherine Tugaineyo, from IDRC.



P.I Jane Kabami and Makerere University representative, Joan Nangendo attending the consortium meeting

### Key Highlights

1. Consortium members; IDRC, MoH, UHI, LSHTM, and Makerere University gave updates on their tasks, highlighting successes, challenges, and proposed solutions.
2. An action plan with specific goals, actions, and dates was developed.
3. A dinner celebration was organised in honor of Professor Heiner Grosskurth (LSHTM) who is retiring from his position.



INTEGRATED HIV/HTN

2023

Consortium

Dinner



About the

Dinner

Professor Heiner Grosskurth graciously accepts retirement gift from consortium partners

A dinner was hosted to honor Professor Heiner Grosskurth for his outstanding contributions to the Integrated HIV/HTN Study. The evening provided an opportunity to commemorate the Professor's impressive accomplishments.



Consortium partners enjoy fine dining and share laughter at consortium dinner

The Integrated HIV/HTN consortium dinner celebrated Professor Heiner Grosskurth's remarkable achievements and dedication to solving complex diseases. The event featured food and drinks, emotional testimonials, and speeches from attendees, highlighting the Professor's lasting legacy and contributions to the medical world. His contributions will be remembered and cherished for future generations.

“ I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Heiner for his invaluable contributions to the Integrated HIV/HTN project, and his dedication and passion for improving lives of participants with HIV and hypertension. We hope to continue consulting Professor Heiner tapping in to his wisdom, and experience whenever needed. We hope there will be more opportunities to work together on future projects together. I see great value in maintaining our connection with him. As Professor Heiner enters retirement, I wish him the best and a fulfilling retirement.” Professor Moses Kanya, Executive Director, IDRC ”



# PROJECT UPDATES

## DISTRICT PERFORMANCE REVIEW MEETING

### A STEP TOWARDS BETTER HEALTH CARE

In the previous weeks, district performance review meetings were held across various districts, bringing together healthcare professionals and stakeholders to discuss the progress of the Integrated HIV/HTN strategies. These meetings served as a platform for collaboration and brainstorming on improving patient care and achieving better outcomes.

Several districts and health facilities were visited as part of the performance review meetings, including Rukiga, Kabale, Rubanda, Kamwegye, Kyenjojo, Kibale, Rwampara, Ntungamo, Buhweju, Isingiro, and Rubirizi. One critical issue consistently raised during the meeting was drug stock outs, particularly due to delays in the supply from the Medical Stores (MS). Action points were developed to address this, including identifying patients with uncontrolled BP and making phone calls to check their medication status. Patients were invited to the facility for refills if necessary, taking advantage of the project-provided stocks.



Members participate in the district performance review meeting in Buhweju

Representatives from different health teams, including the District Health Officer (DHO), DHIV Focal Person, Biostatisticians, NCD focal person, Secretary for Health, as well as health facility teams such as Health Facility in charges, ART focal persons, and data personnel from the facilities, actively participated in these discussions. The district performance review meetings also served as a breeding ground for innovative strategies. Some of the highlighted initiatives included assessing adherence to anti-hypertensive medications for all patients, pending formation of patient clubs, conducting additional reviews for patients with high BP to identify critical issues affecting control, and implementing Quality Improvement (QI) projects to monitor BP documentation and control status on a monthly basis. Furthermore, prioritised topics for discussion encompassed BP control, pharmacological management of hypertension, BP recording on NCD cards, and the formation and statuses of patient clubs.

These district performance review meetings have demonstrated healthcare professionals' collaborative efforts and determination to provide optimal care for patients living with HIV and hypertension. Through a strong partnership and continuous improvement, these integrated strategies are expected to lead to better health outcomes for the communities we serve.



Presentations captivate attendees during the district performance review meeting in Rubanda

### Key Highlights

- 1.District Performance Review Meetings held across Rukiga, Kabale, Rubanda, Kamwengye, Kyenjojo, Kibale, Rwampara, Ntungamo, Buhweju, Isingiro, and Rubirizi.
- 2.Topics of discussion included BP control, pharmacological management, blood pressure recording, HMIS, data management and formation of patient clubs
- 3.Innovative strategies highlighted, including adherence, assessment, patient clubs, additional reviews for patients with high blood pressure, and quality improvement projects



# Highlights on progress for this Year

