The East African Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

By Phil Gothard, Course Director

Hopefully readers are familiar with the Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (DTM&H) and its aim of encouraging talented young doctors to take their first steps towards a career in clinical research. This is the fourth year that LSHTM has offered the course in East Africa and the faculty has grown to include over 140 lecturers, drawn from host’s KCMUC, Makerere University and institutions as far away as New Zealand, Vietnam, South Africa and the USA.

A highlight of the course is the Ugandan field placement, where students spend a week in small groups visiting rural clinics and learning at first hand about healthcare in marginalized communities. This year students visited Bugoigo village on the banks of Lake Albert. Bugoigo is a site for the Ministry of Health’s research programme on Schistosomiasis. Led by Dr Amaya Bustinduy, the group’s task was to examine the complete lifecycle of the parasite and understand the various targets for control. The accompanying pictures show Dr Nuriat Nambooze from Uganda collecting freshwater snails, the intermediate hosts of Schistosoma mansoni, and Dr Luis Malheiro from Portugal using a portable ultrasound to examine a patient for hepatosplenomegaly.

In a cross-sectional survey the DTM&H students found that over a third of school children in Bugoigo are heavily infected with Schistosome eggs and many

Cambridge University strengthens research administration and management in African institutions through CAPREx

By Sophia Mahroo and Pauline Essah

Cambridge THRiVE was delighted to host THRiVE administrator, Harriet Nambooze, for a Research Management Workshop organised by the CAPREx (Cambridge Africa Partnership for Research Excellence) initiative in September 2014. CAPREx is part of the umbrella Cambridge Africa Programme which was set up as a result of the success of THRiVE and

IN THIS ISSUE

- The East African Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
- Cambridge University strengthens research administration in African institutions
- American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) Annual Meeting 2014
- THRiVE Fellows at (ASTMH) Annual Meeting 2014
- THRiVE Contributes to Research Capacity Building at Gulu University
- Rwanda’s experience with THRiVE: Voices of the Scholars
- Building regional Research Networks
- THRiVE 2014 Pump-priming awards and post-doctoral fellowships
- Interview with Dr. Daniel Semakula, incoming Innovations and Knowledge Translation (IKT)
Dear Reader,

THRiVE has now completed 5 years of steady growth since its inception. The Wellcome Trust has provided a one-year no-cost extension and similarly a one-year cost extension both of which will end July 31, 2015. There is opportunity to compete for new funding whose final results will be known in mid-2015.

In this issue of THRiVE News, we bring you insights regarding what has been achieved in three areas. The East African Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (EADTMH) has gained considerable stature and continues to attract applicants from all over the world. However, few applicants from Africa join the programme. The programme will have to think outside the box and find solution for this persistent challenge. There is need to identify funding mechanisms to support participation of more African students. This is important for sustainability and ensuring local relevancy of this important programme. In addition, the credits obtained from the diploma courses could become an essential contribution to related Master’s degree training at all or some of the East African universities.

Strengthening research administration and management (RAM) has become central objective of THRiVE reflected in the different activities in this issue. Research administrators are participating in both regional and international networks for exchange of ideas, professional advancement and networking. Clearly the outlook to research administration has changed and THRiVE institutions are investing heavily to bring about change in RAM in order to build strong research capacity.

Research productivity from the THRiVE network has steadily improved both in quantity and quality. In this issue is a list of some of the publications that have appeared in peer reviewed scientific journals. We have therefore awarded through competitive processes more researchers to undertake postdoctoral training and for others to undertake research supported by pump priming grants. Research administrators are all well placed to support these awardees. We look forward to a bumper harvest.

have already developed liver disease. Their presentation highlighted the failure of current control programmes using mass administration with Praziquantel and instead recommended an integrated approach targeting the economic causes of poverty with a combination of molluscicides, improved sanitation and health education (Ross et al Lancet 2014).

A second group visited Bwindi Community Hospital in the south west of Uganda. Many of you will know Bwindi Impenetrable Forest as the home to half of the World’s remaining 880 Mountain gorillas. Less well known is the impact that creating the UNESCO World Heritage Site had on the lives of the Batwa people, for whom the forest had been a home for over a thousand years. In the 20 years since their forced migration the health and welfare of the Batwa has suffered considerably. Loss of traditional food sharing systems has had a major impact on maternal and child mortality and the disruption of social structures and cultural identity has led to high rates of HIV, alcoholism and communicable diseases (Ohenjo et al Lancet 2006).

At Bwindi Community Hospital students learned that it is possible to make a difference by taking a human rights-based approach to care. Since opening in 2003 the hospital has introduced a sustainable health insurance programme for the entire community, developed a health education to improve nutrition, opened an ante-natal hostel for high risk mothers, and introduced mobile HIV clinics to reach remote communities inaccessible by road.

Dr. Ivan Mambule, a DTM&H student from the Infectious Diseases Institute, was so moved by his visit that he wrote the following poem:

Plight of the Batwa
They lived on wild yams and fruits, honey and bush meat
Hunter gatherers was their trade
They buried under bushes and walked away
They worshipped Gods hidden in rocks. They lived in trees and natural shelters
They made fires by rubbing sticks and habituated with the animals
They told stories and tales to entertain and educate their children - no radio, no TV, no phones. Dancing and drinking was their form of wild entertainment 1992, a year painfully etched in their hearts.
Cambridge THRiVE.

CAPReX runs research and administration training in Cambridge and Africa organised by the Cambridge Research Operations Office (ROO), and THRiVE administrators are also able to attend.

Each participant in the September training course was asked to select a topic covered during the programme to make a presentation about on their final day. This not only demonstrated in-depth understanding of the topic but also allowed for practice of presentation skills in order to support the participant in their plan to develop communications to other faculty and administrative staff upon return to their home institution. Pauline Essah (Cambridge Africa Programme Coordinator) and Sophia Mahroo (Cambridge THRiVE coordinator) attended the last day and were really excited to listen to Harriet’s impressive contribution. It was great to have her represent THRiVE and Makerere University on the programme, especially given what a busy time it was for THRiVE with the DELTAs preliminary submission and all the extra work she must have had to put in.

During the programme, CAPReX organised a dinner for African Fellows, CAPReX Cambridge collaborators and all those involved in the Research Management training. Dr Peter Hedges (Head of the University Research Office, which includes the Research Operations Office) attended and had a great time. Cambridge THRiVE also really enjoyed attending the annual AGM in the beautiful town of Mwanza. We thank our hosts NIMR Mwanza for their hard work. Sophia was sincerely appreciative of the opportunity to meet the dedicated THRiVE community and learn about all the inspiring work that has gone on so far and she is subsequently greatly looking forward to working with the team over the coming year(s).

Research Management Trainee/Fellows at CAPReX dinners Debbie West-Lewis 2nd from the right is the Training Manager at the Research Administration Office who organised and delivered much of the training and is also available for remote support for the fellows when they have returned to their home institution. Dr Peter Hedges, Head of the Research Office, can be seen second from the left. And of course Harriet Nambooze in the centre!
The Bwindi impenetrable forest, their home, gazetted a national park
A world heritage site for the conservation
Of the now money minting mountain gorilla
No land, no compensation, left without a home
No compensation to replace a way of life thousands of years old
Conservation refugees they became to save an endangered species
And yet an endangered species they almost became...

Assuaging our guilt as a race, efforts have been made
Lives dedicated to soothe a people so sorely hurt
Bwindi Community Hospital the efforts of a committed few
Saving the Batwa, a tribe so fondly referred to as “the tiny people of the forest” Bwindi!

The Batwa people of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest

The next East African DTM&H runs from September to December 2015 and the deadline for applications is 31st March. 24 scholarships have been reserved for African doctors with an excellent academic record and minimum of two years postgraduate clinical experience. For further details please contact Miss Angela Steiger at LSHTM Registry: angela.steiger@lshtm.ac.uk

American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) Annual Meeting

Attending this year’s ASTMH conference granted me a professional and academic rewarding experience. I had the privilege of delivering an oral presentation as well as chairing a scientific session on “Global health: Health Systems strengthening and Health Development.”

Having worked in the infectious diseases department my silent question was what other illnesses could be affecting individuals living in an urban community. Working in Kibera Slum (one of the largest in in Sub Saharan Africa) I watched with awe as the community’s lifestyle drastically changed to accommodate the western diet and their long treks to various places replaced by motorcycles also well known as the “piki pikis”. Thus I embarked on my PhD courtesy of the THRiVE Scholarship with an interest to study Hypertension the “silent killer”.

My presentation at ASTMH aimed to show that women of reproductive age living in an urban slum in Kenya suffer and die not only from communicable diseases, maternal causes but also they die from non communicable diseases. Cancers and cardiovascular diseases are the major causes of death among the non communicable diseases. Thus the importance of tackling risk factors like hypertension to curb this problem.

The ASTMH conference gave me an opportunity to interact with scholars, professors and experts in global health though majority of the sessions were focused on infectious diseases. As a PhD Fellow the symposium on career skills focusing on manuscript writing and scientific presentations was quite appealing. Attending the different sessions provided ideas for my next steps (Post Doc) that constantly flashed through my mind and sure enough the exhibitors (academic institutions, organizations and funders e.g. WHO) provided information on opportunities that can help actualize this goal.

I am humbled and grateful to ASTMH society for the opportunity to chair one of the sessions during the annual meeting. I appreciate the experience gained at KEMRI/CDC and acknowledge THRiVE for the opportunities that empower me to reach greater heights as experienced in this year’s ASTMH meeting.
THRiVE Fellows at American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) Annual Meeting 2014

THRiVE was well-represented at the recently concluded 63rd annual meeting of ASTMH; by Beatrice Olack, Stella Kepha and Florida Muro. Given that we are in our final year of the fellowship, we had an opportunity to disseminate some of our PhD work that is largely funded by THRiVE, to the scientific community. Beatrice had the privilege of giving an oral presentation as well as chairing a scientific session on “Global health: Health Systems strengthening and Health Development.” The rest of her experience is contained in an article she has authored in this newsletter.

Florida had an opportunity to compete in the young investigators award, a competition that she gave her all. She also presented her poster during the meeting, addressing the importance of pneumonia management in young children. Her research findings show that over-diagnosis of non-severe pneumonia in a busy clinic is significant and that it tends to vary with age. She concluded by suggesting the need to conduct more research studies on the accuracy and utility of respiratory rate as an indication for antibiotic use especially as vaccines against bacterial pneumonia are introduced to many resource limited countries.

Stella was privileged to get a travel award among 42 others from different parts of the world from the ASTMH to present a poster “epidemiology of soil transmitted helminths (STH) and malaria among school children in Bumula district”. The paper showed that STH and malaria infections are still common in school children, despite the ongoing campaign of annually deworming children. Being her first international meeting of this magnitude, it would have been very overwhelming if she did not have the guidance of Beatrice and Florida who had been there before.

Although most of the sessions were on infectious diseases, easily accommodating Florida and Stella, Beatrice also got an opportunity to interact with scholars, professors and experts in global health. As PhD fellows the symposium on career skills focusing on manuscript writing and scientific presentations was very educative and an eye opener.

Together we attended the opening session and were privileged to listen to Bill Gates lay down his agenda for tropical diseases with an emphasis on malaria and neglected tropical diseases; the session on Ebola was also good to know the progress and challenges in dealing with this outbreak in West Africa. Finally we also had an opportunity to mingle with other students at the students’ reception. Attending the different scientific sessions provided ideas for our next steps (Post Doc) and sure enough the exhibitors (academic institutions, organizations and funders) provided information on opportunities that can help actualize this goal. We are humbled and grateful to ASTMH society for the opportunity to be a part of this year’s meeting. We acknowledge THRiVE for the opportunities that have empowered us to reach greater heights. In addition Beatrice would like to acknowledge KEMRI/CDC.
Dr. Sia Msuya, Director of the Institute for Public Health in KCMUCo, and the Coordinator of the THRiVE Institutional Implementing Committee in KCMC, has applied for the prestigious MRC African Research Leader position in collaboration with LSHTM. Jim Todd, David Mabey, Suzanne Filteau and Hannah Blencowe are supporting the proposal from LSHTM, and Gileard Masenga and Jackie Uriyo are collaborating from KCMC/KCMUCo. The proposal aims to extend Sia’s work on maternal health, by investigating the effect of gestational diabetes on pregnancy outcomes, child growth and neurological development. In countries with a high burden of infectious diseases, such as malaria, and a high prevalence of anaemia in pregnancy, the effect of gestational diabetes may be modified by these other infections. If successful, Sia will screen 6000 pregnant women and follow a cohort of 900 mother-baby pairs to 24 months after delivery. The proposal will support one post-doc and 2 PhD students, and Sia will spend 6 months in the School during the project.

Five years of THRiVE project has seen several successes in various research fronts at Gulu University Faculty of Medicine. On July 17-18, 2014, Gulu Institutional Implementation Committee organised a successful end of THRiVE conference under the theme “Gulu University Thriving on Research: Contributions to Research capacity Building at Gulu University”. Staff from all departments and faculties at the university and undergraduate students from Faculty of Medicine actively participated in the scientific conference which gave way for young and upcoming scientists to interface with their seniors. The conference attracted 22 high quality research papers from staff and students. Professors from all disciplines at the University graced the two day conference. They offered a lot of contributions that shaped many of the presented research papers. According to one of the professors, “Presentations were of high quality and relevant to prevailing research issues within the region”. All students sponsored by the project and those that were awarded pump priming grants by MESAU-MEPI presented their research findings. In addition to those, staff from the faculty and other faculties gave a great scientific talk followed by lively discussions. It is important to note that the University supports research in various ways. This was exemplified during the conference by the participation of management. For instance, the conference was opened by the University Vice Chancellor accompanied by his team from management and the Director, Institute of Research and Graduate Studies at Gulu University. To give feedback to communities of Northern Uganda and embrace knowledge translation, the conference invited local politicians, media houses, community leaders and District Health Officers. District Health Officers from the region were pleased with medical researches being done by students and staff at Gulu. Specifically, they were impressed with research in Nodding syndrome and Malaria. They pledged to continue supporting medical education and research both scientifically and politically in their respective districts. These administrators noted the low number of doctors; they encouraged student doctors, and now practicing doctors to stay within the region. The conference therefore provided a platform for dissemination of medical research, forum for embracing knowledge translation and informing policy makers about what research was being conducted in the region. The conference indicated that research potential at Gulu University was high. The conference participants were grateful to THRiVE and asked that this conference be a yearly event.
Rwanda’s experience with THRiVE: Voices of the Scholars

By Patrick Kyamanywa, Brenda Asiimwe-Kateera, Manasse Nzayirambaho

The School of Medicine and Pharmacy and the School of Public Health at the University of Rwanda, College of Medicine and Health Sciences are founding members of the THRiVE consortium. Twelve staff and students from the College of Medicine and Health Sciences have benefited from scholarships funded through the THRiVE consortium. Below are excerpts from the THRiVE scholars.

“This fellowship will bridge the present technical laboratory research gaps and will provide networking and collaboration opportunities, which are very important for strengthening future research capacity ... the expertise I will gain will enable me contribute significantly to the setting up of research facilities. This will serve as an important training hub for biomedical research in the country.”

Roman Ntale, THRiVE Postdoctoral fellow 2014

“The scholarship from THRiVE has helped me to increase my experience in laboratory analysis skills and contributed to my professional development as an academic staff. I have been promoted from Tutorial assistant to Assistant lecturer and my salary has been increased.”

Bizimana Thomas, MSc Pharmacy 2012

“Without that grant it would have been impossible to penetrate the remote villages in which the study was carried out. In addition, the THRiVE 6th AGM, which was held at NIMR in Mwanza on 19-21 August 2014, served to me as a privileged opportunity to learn from senior health researchers and share research experiences with other THRiVE grant recipients”.

David Ruberwa Nzyimana

“The benefit from the THRiVE scholarship award was beyond my imagination; because with it I now perform excellently in my work. I have realized that more career opportunity doors are open than before!”

Jean-Marie MBONYINTWALI, BSc PSY, MPH

“I don’t have words to thank the entire administration of THRiVE. The support has allowed me to conduct my research on time and I was among the first students to presentation my dissertation”

UTAMULIZA Mathilde

“After receiving the support for my MPH studies from THRiVE, I am confident that I am able to contribute in addressing public health issues and I do so. I am highly thankful for THRiVE support in shaping my Public Health career.”

Angèle MUSABYIMANA MD, MPH

“As a self-funded student, conducting a nationwide survey would not have been possible without support from THRiVE. I thank THRiVE for its contribution to promoting and improvement of Rwanda social health protection through the financial support provided to me and commit to comply with all remaining requirements related to this award”

Nyandekwe Medard, self funded PhD Student

“THRiVE Project has sponsored my MBA which I couldn’t undertake without the support”

KAREMERA Augustine

We remain grateful to THRiVE and look forward to further support for South-South academic collaborations that will extend to faculty dual appointments and movement in the region as well as support to local and regional journals to achieve regular publication cycles and online citations.

The benefit from the THRiVE scholarship award
Building regional Research Networks

By Dickson Muyomba, THRiVE IT Officer

As research activities demand for fast internet connectivity, innovative solutions have been implemented at a national and regional level to separate academic and research data from the commercial network through creating research and educational networks. With the development of national fiber backbone, East African countries have created their own research and educational networks (NREN) i.e. Research and Educational Network Uganda (RENU), Kenya Education Network (KENET) and Tanzania Education and Research Network (TERNET) among others. These networks use the national fiber backbone to provide affordable high capacity connectivity to only research and academic institutions.

The NRENs are designed to support collaborative, cutting-edge and data intensive research. UbuntuNet, a high-capacity regional data network for research and education in Eastern and Southern Africa manages the NRENs in this region.

At the College of Health Sciences, THRiVE facilitated a point to point connection between the college and main campus and now Makerere University has completed its last mile connection to RENU.

Academic institutions such as Makerere University that have taken advantage of such research networks are now starting to realize the benefits in terms of increased bandwidth and enhanced collaborations with international research partners through video conferencing. In addition, THRiVE has supported the IT officer to attend the South African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) conference in Gaborone, Botswana in which a poster presentation titled “Improving Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Institutional Infrastructure to Enhance Research Support Systems” was made highlighting the role played by NREN in building research support structures.

Having THRiVE partner institutions connect to NREN networks in their respective countries will open up numerous opportunities in terms of high speed low cost internet and collaborations between regional and international research networks.

By Harriet Nambooze

The THRiVE Education and Small Grants Committee (ESGC) under the leadership of Dr. Hugh Reyburn (KCMC) yet again awarded 5 THRiVE Pump-Priming grants to faculty within THRiVE institutions. This selection exercise marked the peak of Dr. Hugh Reyburn’s reign as the Chair of the ESGC who has handled the mantle of leadership since the inception of the program. Dr. Daniel Masiga (ICIPE) is now the Chair of the ESGC. THRiVE Consortium expresses gratitude to Dr. Hugh Reyburn for steering the ESGC this far.

As is the norm pump-primes involve investigators from more than one THRiVE institution which has enabled investigators from different institutions to work together. They are intended to enable faculty to collect data that is required to write competitive applications that will later be submitted to other funders. A total of 47 applications were received and out of these 5 were selected for funding. Details of recipients are indicated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dr. Bazil Baltazer Kavishe (PI)  Dr. Sam Biraro Dr. Saidi Kapiga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alphaxard Manjurano (PI) Dr. Jacklin Mosha Dr. Steven Mwakalinga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dr. Benard Kulohoma (PI) Prof. Enock Matovu Dr. Daniel Masiga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rawlance Ndejjo (PI) Angele Musabimana David Musoke Trasias Mukama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dr. Jaffu Chilongola (PI) Mr. Robert D Kaaya Dr. Cally Roper Dr. Reginald Kavishe Mr. Sungwa Matondo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The year 2014 also saw the THRiVE PhD and Postdoctoral Committee (PPTC) competitively awarding THRiVE Postdoctoral fellowships to 5 faculty from THRiVE institutions. Out of the 13 applicants who submitted full application 5 were awarded the fellowships. See below the profiles of the recipients.

Eva Prosper Muro, KCMC – Post-doc fellow

Eva Prosper Muro is a Principal Pharmacist participating in teaching and research activities at Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University.
Pump-priming awards and post-doctoral fellowships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Of Blood Pressure And Risk Factors Associated With Hypertension Among Adolescents And Young People In Northwestern Tanzania And Southern Uganda</td>
<td>NIMR and UVRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping of G6PD deficiency in hotspot area for Mass Drug Administration (MDA)</td>
<td>NIMR KCMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genome Sequence of the Tsetse Polydnavirus (PDV): Insights into Symbiotic and Virus Evolution</td>
<td>ICIPE Makerere University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uptake Of Cervical Cancer Screening And Associated Factors Among Women In Rural Uganda</td>
<td>Makerere University University of Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of sub-microscopic infections and late stage gametocytes of plasmodium species to the dynamics of malaria transmission in low endemic settings</td>
<td>KCMC, LSHTM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

David Kateete completed his PhD under mentorship of Assoc. Professor Moses Joloba, Dept. of Medical Microbiology. The title for his thesis was “Rhomboids of mycobacteria: insight from phylogeny, genomic and complementation analysis”. He studied the genes which bacteria use to communicate and cause disease or resist harsh environments including killing by drugs. Focusing on new intramembrane serine proteases found in all living things, he constructed single and double knockout mutants of *Mycobacterium* species devoid of genes encoding the proteases.

Happy to be awarded the THRIVE grant for her post-doc fellowship for one year. This grant will be extremely helpful to address some of the research questions which were not answered during her PhD programme. Furthermore, the study will show whether HIV-1 drug resistance mutations differ among HIV-1 subtypes, particularly in regions like Tanzania where HIV-1 multiple subtypes co-circulate. During her post-doc fellowship, she will use this opportunity to visit a clinical laboratory in the north and attend a specialized course in pharmacokinetics in therapeutic drug monitoring and the use of ‘WinNonlin’ a pharmacokinetic software package. She will also learn bioinformatics techniques and HIV-1 drug resistance analysis. This will be one of the best ways for capacity building on pharmacokinetics and characterization of HIV-1 viruses. This will also enable her to develop potential to compete for international research funding in future.

David Kateete – postdoc fellow

David Kateete is a THRIVE Postdoctoral Fellow and his research focuses on the role of rhomboid proteases in tuberculosis virulence and drug resistance. He is a faculty in the Department of Medical Microbiology, Makerere University College of Health Sciences. His research interests are “Tuberculosis” and “Hospital Acquired Infections” with a focus on understanding pathogen biology, host-pathogen interactions and drug resistance mechanisms. He aims to generate knowledge that may translate into new treatments for devastating, often neglected diseases in Africa. He has trained in state of the art research laboratories in Medicinal Enzymology in Professor Michael Gelb’s laboratory at the University of Washington; Functional Genomics/ Bioinformatics in Dr. Jessica Kissinger’s and Dr. Fred Quinn’s laboratories at the University of Georgia. He also studied Statistical Genetics/ Genomics with Professor Chris Whalen from the University of Georgia.

College. Her interest in HIV-1 research in the field of prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) started in (1999) when she was involved at the National level in implementing the use of zidovudine and later single dose nevirapine in sero-converted pregnant women. She is very
He associated the genes with DNA replication and transport pathways, a significant finding as the genes.

Roman Ntale – postdoc fellow

Roman is a senior lecturer at the University of Rwanda and prior to this post-doctoral position, he was Head of the Department of Biomedical Laboratory Sciences (BLS) and Principal Investigator for the KHI/CDC, a project that supports the strengthening of laboratory training in Rwanda.

Roman holds BSc and MSc in Biomedical Sciences from Bangalore University, India and the University of Westminster (UWMIN), UK, respectively. He also obtained a PhD (Medical Virology) from the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IIDMM), University of Cape Town (UCT). During his studies, he secured a number of prestigious scholarships and awards, which included the UWMIN full International Scholarship for MSc studies (2002 – 2003), the Poliomyelitis Research Foundation, South Africa (2008 – 2011) and the UCT International Scholarships for PhD studies (2008 – 2012). Important awards included but not limited to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation travel award (Whistler, Vancouver – Canada, 2012), the AIDS Vaccine Conference Scholarships to Bangkok, Thailand (2011) and Barcelona, Spain (2013). Importantly, he completed his PhD studies with a New Investigator Conference award from the AIDS Vaccine 2012 (Boston), where his research abstract was listed among the best five. This award included among others, a stipend of 1000 USD.

Roman’s primary career interests revolve around research on infectious diseases and his current research is looking at the role of sexual networks and the transmitted virus in the spread of HIV in Rwandan at-risk populations, results of which, he hopes will significantly contribute towards the zero AIDS infection health agenda. He expects his fellowship to bridge the present technical laboratory research gaps since PhD completion. In particular, he intends to improve on techniques in HLA typing and related sequencing, which he hopes to utilize often in his future research work. This fellowship has provided great networking and collaboration opportunities, which are once again very important for strengthening his research capacity – He is currently collaborating with the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) and the University of Cambridge (CAM). Professor Pontiano Kaleebu (UVRI) and Dr Simon Frost (CAM) are his supervisors. He hopes the expertise he will gain will enable him significantly contribute to the setting up of research facilities at the department laboratory in the future. Being the only public institution in the country that is mandated to train biomedical laboratory scientists, the laboratory could serve as another important hub for biomedical research in the country.

George PrayGod – postdoc fellow

George is a clinical epidemiologist with a PhD in international nutrition and health from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark obtained in 2010. Since August 2012, he has been based at Mwanza Intervention Trials Unit (MITU), a component of the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR), in Mwanza, Tanzania.

For the past nine years his research has focused on understanding the interactions between infections and nutrition and the link between infectious and non-communicable diseases. Working with Danish colleagues, he has contributed to clinical studies investigating the effects of micronutrient and macronutrient supplementation on tuberculosis treatment outcomes and explored the role of diabetes mellitus as a risk factor for tuberculosis. From 2010 until October 2014, he served as a Mwanza site manager for the Nutritional Support for Africans Adults Starting Antiretroviral Therapy (NUSTART) trial, a large European-Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP)-funded study looking at the effect of vitamins and mineral supplementation on mortality of HIV-infected undernourished patients starting antiretroviral therapy in Tanzania and Zambia. The trial was led by London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) in the UK with collaborators in
Dr. Fatuma Namusoke – postdoc fellow

Fatuma is a Lecturer in Makerere University College of Health Sciences Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. As an Obstetrician/Gynaecologist. She has a lot of interest in malaria in pregnancy and co-infections with neglected tropical diseases like helminths. Malaria in pregnancy affects mainly the rural poor population in the Sub-Saharan Africa leading to poor pregnancy outcome. Co-infections with helminths increase the morbidity and mortality associated with malaria in pregnancy. Children born to mothers with malaria in pregnancy are more susceptible to malaria infection during childhood. The aim is to determine the mechanism by which malaria and helminths co-infections during pregnancy increase susceptibility to malaria in childhood. In addition to conducting epidemiological research studies, I have had training in different laboratory techniques at Makerere University Department of Biochemistry, International Centre for Genetic engineering and Biotechnology in Cape Town with support from the Poverty Related Diseases College and the Uganda Virus Research Institute.

Fatuma completed her PhD in 2014 under the mentorship of Prof. Fred Kironde, Prof. Florence Mirembe of Makerere University and Prof. Mats Wahlgren of karolinska Institutet. The title of the thesis was ‘Sulphadoxine/Pyrimethamine Intermittent presumptive Treatment; Relationship with newborn and maternal plasmodium falciparum infection and Immunity’. She studied how interventions used in prevention of malaria during pregnancy could affect the ability of the newborn to control infections and consequently early childhood. She found that preventing malaria infection during pregnancy prevent the adverse effects of malaria without interfering with immunity in the children.

His post-doctoral fellowship builds-up on NUSTART trial. As part of the fellowship project, he will follow-up patients recruited in the NUSTART trial to estimate the prevalence of pre-diabetes and diabetes, and hypertension and investigate factors associated with these non-communicable diseases and particularly explore if inflammation and increased adiposity during recovery are associated with increased risk for these diseases. This study will help provide data on the burden of chronic diseases among HIV-infected patients on ART and will provide further insights on how to optimize clinical management of HIV-infected patients in the region. This fellowship is supervised by Jim Todd from KCMU-College in Moshi and Prof Suzanne Filteau of LSHTM.

Dr. Daniel Semakula was recently appointed new Innovations and Knowledge Translation Officer

Our staff writer interviewed him on his vision and immediate priorities in IKT. Below are excerpts from the interview

Qn: Thank you for accepting to be interviewed. Could you please tell us who you are, when you joined the college and what you were doing before you took up this office.

Before I joined MakCHS I was a medical officer at MUJHU research collaboration. I was the coordinator of research participant safety monitoring and reporting. My work involved monitoring research participants, identifying and reporting of adverse events, research data quality improvement in addition to the clinical care.

Qn: I have heard about knowledge translation (KT), could you please tell us what exactly knowledge translation is.

Well, the concept of knowledge translation has been defined by
Interview with Dr. Daniel Semakula, incoming Innovations and Knowledge Translation (IKT) Officer, MakCHS

Qn: Why is Knowledge translation important for Makerere University?

We are all aware of the wide gap between what is known from research and how much of what we know that we use to support decision-making. Knowledge translation is important not just for Makerere but for every organization that is involved in generating and using research evidence for decision-making. Knowledge translation guides the research to its intended place of abode, to be used for decision-making. In my view it is the products of KT activities that vindicate the researchers’ justification for conducting research. In the spirit of evidence-based decision-making it is important that institutions have mechanisms for synthesis. Institutions have been blamed for producing research that doesn’t answer societies’ needs while policy makers have been blamed for not using research evidence in making decisions. KT platforms offer unique opportunity for research generators and users to meet and deliberate on research priorities for the nation and region.

Qn: What inspired you to take up this office?

Well, first of all I have a lot of interest in evidence-based medicine. I have always felt that we have a lot of “research waste”. Almost all researchers are asked to provide a justification for their research and why their project should be funded and the most universal statement in research proposals and publications is “The findings from this research will be used by policy makers and practitioners to…. I guess to change the status quo. But the appalling thing is that there is little follow-up to this statement. We do not know how many people have followed this research up to ensure that this the above statement is implemented. My inspiration comes from the desire to build a bridge between research and practice; supporting researchers to communicate their findings better and supporting policy makers to understand and appreciate the value of research, and use it in decision making. I believe that it is only when those two happen that we shall begin to fully exploit the relevance of scientific research.

Qn: From what you have told me it looks like there is a lot of work to be done. What is your priority going to be? Where are you going to start from and how will you proceed?

Oh, Yes! There is a lot of work to be done. My predecessor, Hannington Muyenje did a tremendous job in breaking the ground for this work and set the stage for a long and interesting show. Of course the first thing for me is to go through his work to establish how far he had gone so that I know where to start from. Once this is done I will identify priority activities and draw work plans for addressing the identified priorities.

Qn: Again from what you have described it looks like this is not an easy job. What challenges do you anticipate to encounter on this job?

Every job has its own challenges but those challenges increase in frequency and magnitude when the post is newly created and the appointed person is new to the organization. But the challenges increase further when the job arises from a new concept, a new way of doing things. I anticipate a number of difficulties in engaging people to appreciate the value of this work and even more challenges with the methods for doing this work. Being a new field there is not blue print for how things should be done. I anticipate even going to be more challenges when it comes to evaluating these activities.

Qn: How do you plan to overcome these challenges?

I am determined to overcome each of them by studying how this is done elsewhere, studying the environment where I work and learning from those experiences to inform practice in this field.

Qn: What should we anticipate from this office in the coming months?

In the coming months we shall work with the research and academic fraternity to streamline systems that would forward research outputs to the policy and practice environments. We shall organize workshops to sensitize researchers, practitioners and policy makers about the services and activities of the IKT office.