



AFENET

News

November 2010
Vol. 2, Issue 11

News from the African Field Epidemiology Network

INVESTIGATION OF AN UNKNOWN DISEASE IN NORTHERN UGANDA- A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE FOR UGANDA PROGRAM TRAINEES

By Dr. Michael Adrawa- trainee, Uganda Program



Dr. Michael Adrawa, a trainee of the Uganda Program prepares a chlorine solution to disinfect bodies of people who had died from the undiagnosed disease in Northern Uganda during the investigations

Four trainees of the Uganda Program, namely: Mr. Bernard Lubwama, Dr. Michael Adrawa, Ms. Isha Katongole, and Dr. Robert Mayanja, were part of a multi-sectoral team of human and animal health experts which participated in investigations of an undiagnosed disease in Northern Uganda from 15-30 November 2010, following reports of cases of the disease in Morulem sub-county, Abim District, and Paimol and Omiya Pachwa sub-counties in Agago District. The first case was reported to the Uganda MoH on 10 November 2010.

The trainees worked alongside an expert team of physicians, medical epidemiologists, veterinarians, and environmental health officers from the Uganda Ministry of Health (MoH), Uganda Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF), Makerere University Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, World Health Organization, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and AFENET, to conduct epidemiological and laboratory investigations to

enable adequate description and characterization of the outbreak.

Although the disease remains undiagnosed, the investigation provided trainees with a rich experience in field realities while investigating a multi-dimensional unknown disease. Trainees participated in creating line-lists and establishing systems for identification, referral, isolation, infection control, and clinical management of cases, as well as conducted an environmental risk assessment to determine possible environmental exposures in the transmission of the disease.

Participating in District Task Force meetings enriched their experience in coordination, resource mobilization, and logistics management in an outbreak setting.

This investigation was a unique experience for the trainees because it gave them an opportunity to practice concepts and ideas in line with the One Health approach of disease investigation and response. It enriched their competencies in field epidemiology through interaction with experts

from the various disciplines.

The investigation team made clinical descriptions of cases. Suspect cases presented with severe headache, dizziness, fever, and general body weakness. Secondary symptoms included: abdominal pain, jaundice, watery and bloody diarrhea and vomiting, resulting in restlessness, disorientation, mental confusion, convulsions, coma and death. The duration of illness varied from two to 10 days. These findings were used to develop case definitions for the health facilities to conduct active case finding.

Preliminary results from laboratory investigation by the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI), the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL), and CDC, were negative for Ebola, Marburg, Congo Creman Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF), Rift Valley Fever, and typhoid.

The investigation is ongoing and hopefully the trainees will continue to be part of it. ❖

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MESSAGE FROM AFENET'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this issue of the AFENET newsletter.

AFENET is dedicated to supporting field epidemiology capacity building and systems strengthening in Africa, for effective diseases surveillance, response, and management, and I am grateful for our partners' support in realizing this mission.

In November 2010, together with partner institutions including: United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-Atlanta, Uganda Virus Research Institute, Uganda Central Public Health Laboratory, Uganda Ministry of Health, Uganda Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries, Makerere University Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Makerere School of Public Health, World Health Organization, and United States Agency for International Development, AFENET supported a multi-sectoral team which investigated an outbreak of an undiagnosed disease in Northern Uganda. You can

read more about this activity in the lead story of this newsletter.

Also read about the completion of the training workshops on Strengthening Laboratory Management Towards Accreditation (SLMTA) in Rwanda. AFENET is proud to be associated with the American Society for Clinical Pathologists (ASCP) which organizes the SLMTA training workshops. Currently, two of our staff: Mr. Ndlovu Nqobile from the AFENET Secretariat and Mr. Mohamed Abade from the Kenya Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program, are certified SLMTA trainers.

AFENET acknowledges the role of laboratories in disease prevention and ensuring a healthy population, and we are committed to supporting laboratory initiatives throughout the continent.

Through our laboratory initiatives project called AFENET-Lab, AFENET supports public health laboratory accreditation, laboratory equipment calibration, HIV external quality assurance, as well as

basic laboratory information systems management in Africa.

Thank you for your dedication towards reading news from our Network, and I hope that the stories in this newsletter will be informative and enriching.

Enjoy your reading. ❖



David Mukanga



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PAMJ INTEGRATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES RECEIVES NOD AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

By Dr. Raoul Kamadjeu- Managing Editor, PAMJ

The Pan African Medical Journal (PAMJ) was noted as one of the most technologically advanced open access journals in Africa, during the Open-Access in Africa Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. The conference was held from 10-11 November 2010 at Kenyatta University. It was organized by Biomed Central, in partnership with Computer Aid.

During the conference, participants acknowledged PAMJ's technical sophistication, achieved through its overall design, and mostly through its article-level metrics system. Representatives from Biomed Central revealed that PAMJ's article-level metrics system is far more advanced than many other systems currently in use in the world. They expressed keenness to learn from PAMJ's innovation.

The PAMJ article-level metrics system allows authors and readers to track the progress of any article published in the journal using data on the number of times an article was accessed and from which geographical location it was downloaded, shared, and recommended.

The conference focused on the benefits of open access publishing in an African context, from the perspective of both readers seeking access to information, and researchers seeking to globally communicate the results of their work.

It was attended by about 100 participants who included: scientific and medical publishers, librarians, university administrators, funders, researchers, and editors. ❖

PICTORIAL



1. Dr. Raoul Kamadjeu (2nd left)- one of PAMJ's Managing Editors, with other participants at the Open Access Africa workshop in Nairobi, Kenya
2. Some of the participants of the SLMTA workshop in Rwanda during a group exercise
3. Mr. Ndlovu Nqobile- Laboratory Project Officer at the AFENET Secretariat, facilitates a session during the SLMTA workshop in Rwanda
4. Dr. Pascale Krumm from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)- Atlanta conducts a class during a Scientific Communication course at the West Africa FELTP in Burkina Faso
5. Dr. Walter Odoch, one of the trainees from the Uganda Program makes his award-winning oral presentation at the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene ASTMH Conference in Atlanta, Georgia- USA

Established in 2005 as a non-profit organisation, the African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET), partners with Ministries of Health in Africa, non-government organizations, international agencies, private sector, and other public health agencies to ensure effective prevention and control of epidemics and other public health priority problems in Africa, by strengthening and expanding applied epidemiology and laboratory capacity.

RWANDA CONDUCTS THIRD SLMTA TRAINING

By Mr. Ndlovu Nqobile- Laboratory Project Officer, AFENET Secretariat

Rwanda successfully conducted the third of three recommended training workshops of the Strengthening Laboratory Management Towards Accreditation program (SLMTA) from 1-5 November 2010 in Kigali, Rwanda. The first two SLMTA training workshops were held in January and June 2010 respectively.

The SLMTA trainings are organized by the American Society for Clinical Pathologists, together with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-Atlanta, with the aim of teaching laboratory workers, techniques on how to improve the overall performance of their laboratories, by establishing quality laboratory standards that are affordable and easy to implement and monitor. The SLMTA training workshops seek to support laboratories towards realizing the World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO) stepwise approach; using a 0- to 5-star scale, in recognition of evolving fulfillment of the ISO 15189 standard, rather than pass-fail grading.

Twenty two participants from five major hospital laboratories in Rwanda namely: King Faisal Centre Hospitalier, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Butare, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Kigali, Kanombe Military hospital, and the National Reference Laboratory attended the training.

While opening the workshop, the Rwanda Minister of Health- Dr. Richard Sezibera underscored the importance of laboratory scientists in improving the quality of laboratory services and patient care. Also present at the workshop were Dr. Pratima Raghunathan- CDC Rwanda and representatives from the WHO Rwanda Country Office. Mr. Ndlovu Nqobile- AFENET's Laboratory Project Officer was one of the facilitators at the workshop.

The participants acquired a wealth of knowledge and skills during the trainings, after which they implemented improvement projects, and made presentations of the same.

Some of the topics on which the projects focused were laboratory specimen management, validation of laboratory results, and customer service.

A post-SLMTA training assessment is scheduled for April 2011. ❖

UGANDA PROGRAM TRAINEES ATTEND ASTMH CONFERENCE

By Dr. Raymond Tweheyo- Resident Mentor, Uganda Program

Dr. Walter Odoch, a trainee of the Uganda Program, was recognised among the best five presenters in the Elsevier Clinical Research Award session during the 59th American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) conference which was held from 3-7 November 2010 in Atlanta, Georgia- USA. The award recognizes excellence in clinically-oriented research presented by students (within six months of completing, undergraduate or graduate level training) at the conference.

Dr. Odoch's oral presentation was titled: Sero-prevalence and distribution of Kala-Azar in Pokot county, Amudat district, Uganda.

The Uganda Program was also represented by two other trainees namely: Dr. Simon Peter Kirabira and Mr. Moses Tetui. They made the following oral presentations:

- Health effects and coping strategies to floods in Kumi district, Eastern Uganda: Dr. Peter Kirabira
- Ten year cancer trend and available institutional capacities for response in Uganda-2010: Mr. Moses Tetui

The conference focused on interventions to treat malaria, dengue fever, and other major global health threats as well as immunology of parasitic infections, and clinical and operational management of tropical diseases. It drew over 3,000 delegates from the Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

Founded in 1903, ASTMH is an international organization of scientists, clinicians, and health professionals, with a mission to promote global health through the prevention and control of infectious and other diseases that disproportionately afflict the global poor. ASTHH organizes scientific conferences annually, to bring together health professionals, students, and researchers to discuss issues concerning tropical medicine and global health, and to disseminate their study findings. ❖

6th TEPHINET Global Scientific Conference
Cape Town, South Africa
13-17 December 2010



Theme: *Providing a Platform for Public Health Action*

Visit the conference website for more information: <http://www.tephinetcconference.co.za/>