

# Vanderbilt-CIDRZ AITRP

A quarterly publication of the Vanderbilt-CIDRZ AITRP program

## Letter from the Primary Investigator

Dear AITRP trainees, alumni, and partners:

It is hard to believe that we are in our eleventh year of our AITRP-Zambia partnership. Since 1998 we have trained 37 Zambian health professionals in public health degree programs, many of whom have gone on to hold major leadership and research posts.

Despite our efforts along with our partner AITRPs in Zambia, the demand for a larger cadre of Zambian independent research leaders remains. Our goal is to develop Zambian clinical investigators who can be leaders in independent investigation, including research through data analysis, manuscript submission and grant writing. The CDC-GAP leadership in Lusaka thankfully has concurred with this need and has provided substantial support for four supplements to our parent AITRP award. The following newsletter highlights our activities to date and showcases the outstanding capacity building underway at the University of Zambia Masters of Medicine program.

-- Dr. Sten H. Vermund



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## Capacity building and training in Zambia

The VU-CIDRZ AITRP has played an important role in the development and sustainability of research capacity in Zambia. Thirty-seven Zambians have received Masters of Public Health (MPH) from the University of Alabama at Birmingham or Masters in Science (MSc) from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; all have returned to work in Zambia. Over 500 Zambians have been trained in-country and over 45



Zambians have been trained in public health short courses at UAB.

The program has been instrumental in strengthening the ability of Zambian investigators to take part in large-scale public health evaluation, service,

and research projects, take on leadership positions in initiatives such as PEPFAR, and apply for additional research and public health service funding.

Since the program's implementation in 1998, there has been a high demand for additional primary training as well as continuing education for public health professionals and to continue building institutional capacity in Zambia.

Since the beginning

of its collaboration with the University of Zambia (UNZA) and the University Teaching Hospital (UTH), the VU-CIDRZ AITRP has continued to work closely with the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health to provide biostatistics and research methods training at UNZA, to build medical informatics capacity, and to improve the overall climate for research with donated journals, guest seminars, and research consultation.

# *In-country advanced short courses*

Our viewpoint was, and still is, that research excellence will not be found when technical expertise and practice-based experience are lacking; both must be upgraded for a developing country setting to succeed in biomedical and behavioral research.

The Vanderbilt-CIDRZ AITRP has conducted three workshops (May 2005, April 2006, and January 2008) in Zambia sponsored by FIC-CDC entitled "Advanced Short Course in Proposal Writing and Manuscript Preparation." The short-courses were focused on upgrading HIV/AIDS/TB/STI-related research capacity among already trained, experienced Zambian health profes-

sionals. Many of the trainees have received MPH or MSc degrees from UAB, LSHTM, or other universities, while others have completed MPH or M.Med training at the University of Zambia.

All trainees (73 total) were in positions of academic authority, government service, or non-governmental activity in which they have the opportunity to engage in HIV/AIDS/TB/STI-related research. Trainees were encouraged to bring their works-in-progress, including manuscripts and/or proposals, to serve the dual function of training and project/research development.



*Dr. Sahasrabudde, AITRP Alum and Course Instructor. Jan 2008*

## Advanced short course in monitoring and evaluation

The most recent short course was conducted January 19-22, 2009. Per the results from a web-based survey completed by our in-country partners, we conducted an advanced short course in monitoring and evaluation at Protea Lodge, Zambia. The primary lecturer was Dr. John E. Ehiri, PhD, MPH, MSc, Associate Professor of Maternal and Child Health, Director, UAB Framework Program in Global Health

School of Public Health, University of Alabama at Birmingham. Dr. Vermund conducted the EPI-Info component of the training. Twenty-seven trainees from 22 different academic, NGOs, and private sectors attended.

After the course, many participants also took the free USAID Monitoring and Evaluation Web Training at <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/training>.



*Dr. Vermund with the participants at Protea Lodge, Zambia*

## UNZA Master of Medicine program enhancement

The Master of Medicine program (M.Med) is the oldest and largest of all the postgraduate programs in the School of Medicine. It has been running for 27 years and has graduated over 1,500 students. The overall objective of the CDC-supported VU CIDRZ partnership is to strengthen the Master of Medicine program.

Through the CDC support to our AITRP, we, along with our partners at UNZA, are beginning to transform and enhance the M.Med program.

The work began in November 2008. A needs assess-

ment was conducted in order to identify key areas needing strengthening.

Through this process it became visible that the faculty and students needed several levels of training and fiscal support.

The first action was to restructure leadership of the M.Med disciplines. UNZA appointed M.Med faculty coordinators for each of the 6 disciplines (surgery, internal



medicine, research coordinator, etc.) and one in the Medical Education Department. This was done in order to strengthen each programs' (a) student mentorship, supervision and research (b) to standardize and structure the M.Med curriculum. The Research Coordinator completed a comprehensive research training at VU in April 2009. All of the Coordinators will continue to have routine research methods and mentoring training.

As of September 2009, each M.Med program has a revised draft curriculum outlin-

ing core competencies and objectives.

The Research Coordinator in partnership with our VU and UAB partners also developed a research methods course which students will take in their second year to assist them in preparing for their dissertation. The goal is to implement the new curriculum by 2010.

The third main component of support is for student dissertations.

The supplement is currently supporting three M.Med students with their HIV-related dissertation projects.

# Special Thanks to our Partners in Zambia

Our program is only as strong as our partners. Because of your dedication and determination, our program continues to develop and sustain research capacity in Zambia.

**CIDRZ:** Dr. Benjamin Chi, Ms. Muleba Matafwali

**CDC:** Dr. Isaac Zulu

**Catholic Medical Mission Board, Inc.:**  
Dr. Moses Sinkala

**UNZA:** Dr. Mulla, Dean UNZA School of Medicine; Dr. K. Bowa, Assistant Dean Post Graduate & Program Director of VU-UNZA Capacity Building in Zambia program; Dr. Sekelani Banda; Head of Dept. of Medical Education & M.Med

Research Coordinator; M.Med Coordinators: Dr. J. Chipeta (Peds); Prof. M. Labib (Urology); Dr. N. Lambwe (Internal Medicine); Dr. L. Chikoya (Surgery); Dr. B. Vwalika (Obgyn); Dr. J. Munthali (Orthopedics); J. Schurgers (Educational Coordinator); and the many M.Med student representatives.

## Vanderbilt-CIDRZ AITRP Trainee Publications

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\*Remember all articles arising from NIH funds must be submitted to PubMed Central upon acceptance for publication. Go to <http://publicaccess.nih.gov>



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