

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Post traumatic stress, HIV and malaria: contemporary issues explored in depth

Today is the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of *African Health Sciences* having been launched in August 2001. In three years *AHS* has grown from strength to strength reaching a climax in April 2003 when it was indexed by MEDLINE – a clear note of confidence in *AHS* by a reputable indexing organization. *African Health Sciences* has firmly established herself as a leading health sciences journal in Africa and beyond.

This would have not been possible without the unwavering support of Professor Nelson Sewankambo the Dean of Makerere University Faculty of Medicine, our editorial staff, the board, international advisers, authors, reviewers, readers and well wishers. To all of you we extend our most heartfelt thanks for your continued support.

In this 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary issue of *African Health Sciences* we bring you a moving article on traumatic events and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder amongst Sudanese refugees – a study by Dutch, German and US based researchers. They compared the incidence of traumatic events and its association with post-traumatic stress disorder in Sudanese nationals in Southern Sudan refugees and Ugandans in the West Nile region.

Sudanese refugees reported the highest number of violence events experienced. Witnessing traumatic events significantly predicted PTSD. The prevalence of PTSD was 48% for Sudanese stayees, 46% for Sudanese refugees and 18% for Ugandan nationals. The high prevalence of violence and symptoms of PTSD in refugee populations highlight the need for better protection and security in refugees settlements. These findings are pertinent especially when the Sudan has come under international scrutiny because of the humanitarian catastrophic events unfolding in the Darfur region.

Our second paper continues on HIV/AIDS. This time we focus our attention on the possibility of using simple total lymphocyte counts instead of the more expensive CD4+lymphocyte counts<sup>2</sup>. Academic Alliance for AIDS Care and Prevention in Africa scientists based in Uganda and the USA report on their surprise finding that total lymphocyte count of 1200 is not a sensitive predictor of CD4 lymphocyte count among patients with HIV disease in Kampala, Uganda. Unfortunately the cut off point of 1200 lymphocytes did not identify the majority of WHO stage 2 and 3 with CD4 counts less than 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>. They recommend that a more rational use of TLC is to treat all patients with WHO stage 2 and 3 who have a TLC <1200 and to limit CD4 counts to symptomatic patients with TLC >1200.

In keeping with our HIV/AIDS theme we bring you an interesting article on language and sexuality among youth in an urban township in South Africa<sup>3</sup>.

Terry Selikow pursuing PhD studies in the University of Alberta, Edmonton in Canada found that

the use of language influences youth sexuality. The youth have developed a specialized language to talk about sex and this language has become part of the daily discourse so that unsafe sexual practices become norms and justified.

Tanzanian and Norwegian workers report results of an interesting collaboration between the national TB programme and non government organizations in the care of TB/HIV patients at district level<sup>4</sup>.

From Zimbabwe, US and Zimbabwean researchers report on the predictors of urinary schistosomiasis morbidity in a country where up to 60% of children in the country had *S.haematobium*<sup>5</sup>

Ugandan and US researchers report on health seeking behaviour for malaria among child and adult headed households in Rakai district where HIV/AIDS children live in child-headed households. Respondents in child-headed households had less knowledge on signs and symptoms of malaria and were less likely to seek care from health facilities .

I hope that you enjoy reading this 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary issue of *African Health Sciences* the MEDLINE indexed journal that brings you up to date well-researched papers from Africa.

James K. Tumwine  
Editor

#### Reference

1. Karunakara UN , Neuner F , Schauer M, Singh K , Hill K , Elbert T, Burnha G. Traumatic events and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder amongst Sudanese nationals, refugees and Ugandans in the West Nile. *African Health Sciences* 2004; 4(2): 83-93.
2. Kanya MR, Semitala FC, Quinn TC, Ronald A, Njama-Meya D, Mayanja-Kizza H, Katabira ET, Spacek LA. Total lymphocyte count of 1200 is not a sensitive predictor of CD4 count among patients with HIV disease in Kampala, Uganda. *African Health Sciences* 2004; 4(2): 94-101.
3. Selikow TA. "We have our own special language." Language, sexuality and HIV/AIDS: a case study of youth in an urban township in South Africa. *African Health Sciences* 2004; 4(2): 102-108
4. Wandwalo E, Kapalata N, Tarimo E, Corrigan CB, Morkve O. Collaboration between the national tuberculosis programme and a non governmental organization in TB/HIV care at a district level: experience from Tanzania. *African Health Sciences* 2004; 4(2): 109-114
5. Brouwer KC, Munatsi A, Ndhlovu PD, Wagatsuma Y, Shiff CJ. Urinary schistosomiasis in Zimbabwean school children predictors of morbidity. *African Health Sciences* 2004; 4(2): 115-118.
6. Amuge B, Wabwire-Mangen F, Puta C, Pariyo GW, Bakyaite N, Staedke S, Kanya M, Olico-Okui. Health-seeking behaviour for malaria in child and adult headed households in Rakai district, Uganda. *African Health Sciences* 2004; 4(2): 119-124
7. Ndawula J, Kabasa JD, Byaruhanga YB. Alterations in fruit and vegetable  $\beta$ -carotene and vitamin C content caused by open-sun drying, visqueen-covered and polyethylene-covered solar dryers. *African Health Sciences* 2004; 4(2): 125-130
8. Kutesa-Mutebi A, Osman YI. Effect of ferrule on fracture resistance of teeth restored with prefabricated posts and composite cores. *African Health Sciences* 2004; 4(2): 131-135.