



MakCHS-UMU Brain Health PROGRAM



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Dr. Mark Kaddu Mukasa

*Message
from
the Program
Director*

Dear Reader

Greetings from the Brain Health project!!!
We welcome you to our first edition of the Brain health newsletter in which will share highlights of the Brain health training program and other related activities. It will be produced bi-annually.

The brain health program builds on the successes of the previous MEPI awards and addresses the challenges observed in creative and innovative ways. This five-year funding from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke and the Fogarty international center commenced in August 2020, after Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS), Case Western Reserve University and partner institutions (Uganda Martyrs University, Nsambya PGME) successfully won a highly competitive grant

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from NIH; “Research training and mentorship to strengthen brain health across the lifespan in Uganda”.

The goal of the brain health project is to utilize innovative mentoring and enhancing brain research capacity among faculty and graduates, taking into consideration the local context and innovations as we support the existing leadership and build new leadership for education research at all levels in the education and health system. The specific objectives are;

1. To provide targeted training and mentorship for individualized brain health research capacity development of junior and mid-level faculty to become independent research leaders, capable of addressing regionally relevant brain health challenges and influence policy and practice.
2. To support multi-disciplinary research training in selected personalized short courses to understand the research process, and enable address brain health and neurological disorders common across the lifespan.

3. To enhance institutional capacity to sustain research support systems that enable a conducive research environment at MakCHS.

The first months have been utilized to plan for the implementation of the program activities, select the first cohort of students (Year1 Masters and PhD trainees), and develop selected training courses to enhance research methodology. This has not been a stroll in the park especially with the global pandemic necessitating a shift in the way things were done before. We have utilized newer technologies like having virtual meetings and trainings.

This first edition has a wide range of brain articles ranging from Autism, blood pressure variability in stroke patients, west syndrome, seizures in stroke survivors, carotid atherosclerosis and traumatic brain injury.

We look forward to future training engagements and interactions with future leaders in brain health and having their research findings disseminated.



“BLOOD PRESSURE VARIABILITY AND EARLY CLINICAL OUTCOME AMONGST STROKE PATIENTS ADMITTED AT MBARARA REGIONAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL”

Nicholas Kulaba,

An Internal Medicine Resident from Mbarara University of science and Technology (MUST).

I got to know about Brain Health Program after the HOD had shared with me an advert about a research scholarship opportunity calling for research Proposals for Master’s Students in medicine under the theme “Reducing stroke or stroke risks among High-Risk Ugandan”. This coincided with my dream of pursuing clinical research as a career mostly in Neurology. Earlier to this timely scholarship, I had participated in a proposal writing for a grant under International Society for Infectious Diseases but I did not get. This experience enhanced my proposal writing from nothing. I developed a research project titled “BLOOD PRESSURE VARIABILITY AND EARLY CLINICAL OUTCOME AMONGST STROKE PATIENTS ADMITTED AT MBARARA REGIONAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL” under the guidance of MUST supervisors. Patients with acute stroke are prone to blood pressure variations in the first 7 days of stroke due to impairment of

cerebral autoregulation which later leads to poor clinical outcome and this effect is evident by day 14. The degree of disability later on, is dependent on blood pressure changes in the first week of stroke onset. This study will increase on the knowledge body so as to improve care on blood pressure changes among stroke patients. After a few months of submission of the application, I was informed that I had been awarded the scholarship for my research project by Brain Health Program. This scholarship opportunity has quickened my research process. I have already presented my research project to the department, submitted to Faculty Research Ethics Committee for Approval and now waiting for the approval letter.

Brain Health Program provides interesting opportunities for young clinical researchers to develop their careers like understanding the intricacies of research ethics, methods, data analysis and manuscript writing for publication. I have so far benefited two mentors for support in the proposal development and career guidance so as to become an independent clinical researcher. I have also earned a training in epidemiology of non-communicable diseases and an online training in Research Ethics. It is with no doubt that this project shall be published in peer review medical journals.

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The epidemiological transition of diseases in Uganda which is a developing country puts non-communicable diseases on top. My enthusiasm for health puts me in position to better appreciate the current situation so as to play an important role in prevention, treatment and introducing evidence-based practices through clinical research regarding non-communicable diseases in Uganda. I am convinced that this program will build my research skills for future

research and also to be able to mentor others.

Through this program, I will be able to confidently write the manuscripts for publication, to network so that I can be able to do many other research projects with other people and also to achieve continual mentorship from the Brain Health Program experts.

This scholarship is an immense opportunity in my Master's program as it is introducing me to clinical research.



THE PREVALENCE AND FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH WEST SYNDROME AMONG CHILDREN WITH EPILEPSY AGED BETWEEN 2 MONTHS TO 5 YEARS ATTENDING THE PAEDIATRICS NEUROLOGICAL CLINIC AT MULAGO NATIONAL HOSPITAL, KAMPALA

I am Dr Tumwine Nasur,

Resident in Paediatrics and Child Health, Makerere University. I came to learn about the Brain health program research scholarship opportunity through an advert note that was pinned on the noticeboard within our department. It stipulated clearly the interest in brain health and neurological diseases, care and prevention and commitment to develop and maintain a productive career and devoted to brain health, clinical practice and prevention. This was at a time when my research proposal project was already discussed and approved by the university IRB to conduct the research.

Having a topic entitled "the prevalence

and factors associated with West syndrome among Children with epilepsy aged between 2 months to 5 years attending the Paediatrics neurological clinic at Mulago National Hospital, Kampala" made me get a straightforward answer as it was in the scope of the program. I went on to apply following the instructions provided in the advert. After an estimated period of four months, I received an email congratulating me upon the scholarship following the review of my proposal that emerged as the best having met the award criteria of Makerere College of Health Science (MakCHS)-Brain Health Training program. With this golden opportunity in the way of my career, and having additionally been assigned two more supervisors, meant excellence towards my research and I had to focus.

This project is funded and supported by

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the national institute of neurological disorders and stroke and stroke of the national institute of health. and the findings of the study shall be published in peer-reviewed medical journals.

The benefits of this project are funding the research project, receiving a monthly stipend and attending trainings in scientific research that include the following; introduction to research ethics, epidemiology of non-communicable diseases, implementation science, social determinants of health, research methodology, Good clinical practice, statistical analysis and manuscript

writing among others.

My passion lies in epilepsy in children, this encompasses various syndromes that include West syndrome that am set to find its prevalence and factors associated in Mulago, Uganda given the fact that its prevalence is not clearly established. I dream being one of the contributors towards the prevention and control of epilepsy in children and with the trainings above, I highly believe I will achieve my dream.

In conclusion, am greatly indebted to the brain health program- MakCHS for considering me among the people to participate and benefit academically in the program, this will certainly introduce me to my future research career.



PREVALENCE OF SEIZURES IN STROKE INPATIENTS AND ASSOCIATED RISK FACTORS IN NSAMBYA HOSPITAL-ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAPHY CONFIRMED SEIZURE.

Dr. Kasekende Ronald,
SHO Nsambya Hospital

My name is Kasekende Ronald, a second-year student of MMed Internal Medicine at Uganda Martyrs University: Mother Kevin Postgraduate Medical School, Nsambya Hospital.

I landed onto the advert on a WhatsApp group from Makerere College of Health Sciences for call for

application for research proposal on Stroke to be funded by "Brain Health Program". I applied for support because I picked interest in stroke due to the large numbers of stroke patients that are admitted and managed from Nsambya Hospital and the increasing trends of non-communicable diseases in Uganda and Africa in general.

My research topic is, "PREVALENCE OF SEIZURES IN STROKE INPATIENTS AND ASSOCIATED RISK FACTORS IN NSAMBYA HOSPITAL-ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAPHY

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CONFIRMED SEIZURE.” I am currently in advanced stages of proposal development, writing literature review. This topic was informed by the fact that little research has been done about seizure in stroke patients, especially in Uganda yet stroke is on the rise the last decade. There is a need for a study on the prevalence and risk factors for seizure among the stroke patients. With limited information clinicians are left to guess about which patients to give prophylaxis for seizures. The practice in Nsambya Hospital has been that anticonvulsants are given to patients who report witnessed seizures or those with large bleed or infarcts in the brain. Also many patients with stroke have seizures, especially the non-convulsive type that is not recognized by the family members and clinicians. I want to involve EEG in the diagnosis of seizures among the stroke patients to help identify patients with non-convulsive seizures that go undiagnosed. This will be a prospective, descriptive cross-sectional study carried out in Nsambya Hospital. I expect to collect quantitative data from all stroke patients admitted at Nsambya Hospital. All patients will be consented before getting involved in the study. Patients who will report with a witnessed convulsive seizure will be confirmed to have seizures and those with no witnessed convulsive seizures will undergo an EEG to confirm a seizure activity. Electroencephalography (EEG) can identify biomarkers of epileptogenesis and ictogenesis. However, few studies have used EEG in the prediction of post stroke seizures. We expect the

following from this study; 1. To know the prevalence of post-stroke seizures. 2. To know the associated risk factors. 3. To know the percentage of patients who have non-convulsive seizures.

As a member of this research group, I have had several trainings that have added on my understanding of research. And recently I did an online course in Introduction to Research Ethics from Johns Hopkins Center for Clinical Global Health Education and Fogarty International.

I expect to become a clinical researcher with continued research training. Also hope to write more research studies in the field of stroke and other non-communicable diseases. With further training in this research group, expect to learn manuscript writing. This has given me an opportunity to meet renowned researchers and academicians in Makerere University CHS. I am confident that this program will help me complete my research work for the award of a Degree in Masters of Medicine in Internal Medicine. This program will help lay the foundation for further research in the clinical field and connect me with many researchers from within and without. Being in this research group, I have realized the gap that exists in clinical research in Uganda especially in the field of non-communicable diseases which up to now had limited funding and attention. As part of Brain Health Program I will be able to publish my work in international reputable journals.

I found the advert for the Brain Health Training Program at the Makerere University Medical School, and I knew that this opportunity was meant to me. I was very glad to see this precious opportunity to make

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my dreams true by anchoring me in the neurosciences career as I always aim to build capacity in Academia in the neurological and surgical fields. I had a Ph.D. proposal on one of the aspects of TBI management, but the funding was lacking. I applied after the improvement of my proposal with the required support documents, and my Ph.D. proposal was considered by Brain Health Program after competitive selection. I also recognized the contributions of Dr. KadduMukasa Mark during the review of my Proposal at the Higher Degree Research and Ethics Committee (HDREC) review that has significantly improved my project.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is one of the leading causes of worldwide mortality, and disability. Sixty-nine million persons are estimated to suffer TBI from all causes each year, and affecting the young adult productive population. In low/middle-income countries (LMIC), there has been observed in the last decade changing the epidemiology of TBI with an increased number of patients and worsened outcomes due to the increased motorization without adequate road traffic education; hence, TBI is referred to as “the silent epidemic”, since most of its long-term consequences, especially cognitive impairments, and epileptic disorders are not obvious. Current guidelines emphasize saving lives in the acute situation, but the long-term disability among survivors constitute the real socio-occupational, economic, and reintegration burden for both

patients and government.

In Uganda, the growing population and increased motorization make the road environment increasingly complex; there is an increased number of TBI generally due to road traffic crashes and assaults. Several features are observed in head injuries, and one of them is skull fractures. Depressed skull fracture (DSF) is a type of head injury in which a segment of the vault of the skull is depressed below its anatomical position, and its edges may become locked underneath the adjacent intact bone, as a result of high-energy rapid compression force applied to a small area of the skull, often associated with intracranial injuries which include vascular damage and direct brain damage. It may constitute an abnormal area of direct physical irritation of the pulsating brain. The timing for DSF surgery in low-income-countries remains unclear due to the risks from the intraoperative bleeding versus surgical site infection (SSI). Neuro-inflammation induced by trauma, anaesthesia, and surgery stress potentially predispose patients to late post-traumatic epilepsy (PTE).

The aim of the study is to determine whether the timing of surgery of DSFs has an impact on the systemic inflammatory response, intraoperative blood loss, the occurrence of SSI, and the incidence of PTE. This will be achieved through 5 sub-studies. At the end of this project, clinicians could categorize, and optimize the management of patients with head trauma in LMIC settings. Currently, the research proposal was approved, and data collection is ongoing for the next 1-2 years.

Brain Health has funded the sub-studies of my projects that was a major limitation

for conducting properly this research. On top of that, we benefited from closed mentorship, and Ph.D. peer-support working within Neurological research. We also benefited from serial training opportunities on Bio-ethics, clinical epidemiology, and biostatistics to enhance our ability to conduct doctoral studies.

In addition to the research funding, this grant will help me to achieve academic growth through an interdisciplinary environment and training such as bio-ethics, grants and manuscript writing, implementation science, behavioral sciences research, qualitative and quantitative research methodology, data analysis, and research management.

I believe that the Brain Health Program will enable me to complete successfully my Ph.D. training at Makerere University, and also enhance my career in Brain Health. After Ph.D. completion, I will strengthen Academia to teach others locally, and

build the research capacity at Makerere University. Together with the peers, we will set up a local research group working and promoting brain health, and also networking with scientists from other African countries that have similar problems with TBI.

First of all, I plan is to properly conduct my Doctoral research studies in accordance with Makerere University's requirements. I will conduct my data collection with the support of the Brain Health Program, and especially the guidance of my mentors.

On the other hand, through the different series of seminars/courses/workshops within the Brain health Training Program, I will achieve my personal academic growth, by exposing myself to an interdisciplinary environment and philosophical reasoning. I will acquire 3 groups of competencies: scientific (mentoring, and high-quality research articles...), technical (clinical medicine, leadership position...), and personal transferable soft skills (critical thinking, problem-solving, autonomy, communication skills, learning ability, creativity, innovation...).



PREVALENCE OF CAROTID ATHEROSCLEROSIS AND ITS CORRELATION WITH APOB/APOA1 RATIO AND TEN-YEAR PREDICTED ATHEROSCLEROTIC CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE RISK AMONG PATIENTS WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES MELLITUS IN SOUTHWESTERN UGANDA

Patrick Kambale Saasita,

Resident in Internal Medicine from Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST). I never knew anything about the Brain Health Program not until I saw an advert

in a WhatsApp group about a research scholarship opportunity for Masters students in Medicine having interesting research projects on stroke or/and stroke risk factors in high-risk Ugandans. The advert was released from Makerere University through the Reducing Stroke Among the High-Risk Ugandans Program.

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By that time, I had my third-year research project already discussed in the department of Internal Medicine and I had received approval from the Faculty of Medicine Research Committee (FRC) to conduct research.

I wrote to the in-charge of inquiries for Mbarara University in the Reducing Stroke Program asking whether my topic was in the scope of the program. The title was "Prevalence of Carotid Atherosclerosis and its Correlation with apoB/apoA1 ratio and Ten-year predicted atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease risk among patients with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in Southwestern Uganda". She quickly gave me a positive answer. So, I applied on the 18th of November 2021 following the instructions provided and after a few months, I was informed that the application was successful. Since that time, I have been reading about Brain health and I found it a very interesting and excellent field for research.

With this program, I quickly polished up my proposal before submitting it to the MUST-Research Ethics Committee (MUST-REC). I initially had two supervisors from MUST but the program added me two more supervisors who helped me improve

my proposal and my research protocols. This project will be funded by the Reducing Stroke Program and the findings of the study shall be published in peer-reviewed medical journals. In this program, we are going to benefit not only from research funds but also we are having a training in scientific research. So far, I have benefited from training in bioethics (Introduction to Research Ethics) and epidemiology of non-communicable diseases.

I have a great interest in cardiovascular diseases including stroke among patients with diabetes and in the future, I want to be among the people playing an important role in research about cardiovascular diseases among diabetes patients and if possible, I want to contribute to prevention and control of these diseases. I strongly believe that this training will prepare me for my future research career. There are research skills that I need which will help me in the future. These include research ethics, data analysis, and interpretation, writing a manuscript... By the end of this training, I will be able to understand these steps and conduct clinical research and also be able to mentor other people in research. I also believe this will help me prepare for my Ph.D. research as well.

In conclusion, this program is a big opportunity in my Master's program and it is introducing me to research and is helping me prepare for my future research career.

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR'S TRAINING IN GRANTS MANAGEMENT

The main goal of the research administrator's training was to provide a platform to build the capacity of new & upcoming researchers in grants management as well as discussing other financial and Career development aspects that complement the granting mechanism. This was also an opportunity to make the College staff and junior Research administrators aware of grants team in the Grants & Contracts Office of Makerere University College of Health Sciences and how readily available it is to extend adequate support to college researchers, PIs, grants administrators in managing any grants related tasks.

This training was organized by Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS) with the support of Brain Health Program led by Dr. Kaddumukasa Mark. This initiative was very much appreciated and it was timely considering that the junior research administrators had not been fully introduced to Pre and Post Award Administration/Grants management cycle, proposal development and submission, submitting a Financial Federal Report using the Payment Management System (PMS).

This was also used as an introductory training in various aspects of grant Management and basically handled a number of topics that comprised of various areas in the grant's management cycle.



MY OPPORTUNITY WITH BRAIN HEALTH PROGRAM

John Baptist Ssenyondwa,

From the time I joined the Master's program at Makerere University, I knew that I had to graduate from the program, an achievement that requires one to have a dissertation before the degree is awarded. I also knew that I had to stay focused on program going through the rotations diligently to make a good surgeon out of me. This was when the world was hit by the COVID 19 pandemic. Most activities were put on a standstill and health care delivery was to be sturdier to save lives. As deaths from COVID 19 hit surging levels in Italy and the rest of the developed world, people in Uganda continued to die from trauma related causes among other NCDs. This was at the time when I was among the frontline residents in the Accident and emergency unit at Mulago hospital. I picked special interest in trauma as most of my patients presented with trauma related morbidities with very poor outcomes. On a special Thursday morning as I walked through the corridors of Mulago Hospital, I came across a call for research proposals under the Brain Health program. This intrigued my curiosity to develop a concept with the background of my experience managing trauma victims especially TBI patients. Knowing

what the problem was enabled me to develop a study concept with which I applied to the Brain Health Program. I was happy to learn that my concept had been accepted among the many, and the rest is history.

Having been accepted into the program was a big motivation for me to continue work on my proposal. I had already developed the proposal and it is this that I presented to my department for review. I had a great team of faculty and colleagues look at my work and received a bunch of comments on how to proceed with the work. Being a resident under surgery is very demanding and it comes with high expectations both from supervisors and patients.

Despite all this, I managed to implement the advice received from the comments and areas of correction. Just when I was about to proceed to submit my protocol the school REC, I received another blow to my progress. One of the supervisors on my project was not fully convinced of the work I had done. He suggested changes and corrections which I implemented. It was also during this time that I got to know of our mentors from the Brain Health Program both local and from the United States. I now had a big team to discuss my work with and to guide actions for the project. One of the paradoxical comments I received during this period was that "You will never have this work free from comments, even the REC will give you remarks". I had had so much input from my



Group Photo with all the trainees. (Young Research Administrators)

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supervisors and mentors yet I did not feel ready to submit the work to the REC for review and later approval. I gathered courage and submitted my protocol, to the IRB and I am currently awaiting approval.

It has been close to 3 months since I joined Brain health. I must say that all credit goes to the program as regards my progress in research. I have met individuals outside my world of surgery that have helped define me. The program offers us with mentors through the program, individuals who we can freely discuss any challenges or oversights throughout the program, Additionally, the program offers

training avenues both online and through workshops that are beneficial for a starting researcher like me. I was able to attend the research ethics course organized by John Hopkins University. The course enabled me to appreciate the principles underpinning research.

I feel delighted to be part of this program. I look forwards a bright future under the program. I expect to complete my research under this program. I additionally expect to use this opportunity as a stepping stone for better research opportunities. I also expect this program to expose and orient me into the research world. I hope to make new friends from this program, individuals that will be lifelong partners through my career.



BIOINFORMATICS, FINDING THE GENETIC DETERMINANTS OF MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER

Olga Nsangi.

She's an enthusiast of research in human genetics and its role in non-communicable diseases especially on the African continent. I am a post graduate student of Bioinformatics, finding the Genetic determinants of major depressive disorder (MDD) among adult persons living with HIV in Uganda. It entails genotyping humans diagnosed with depression and those without depression to find single nucleotide polymorphism that would be associated with depression. I am progressing steadily in this

research and at the stage of developing a genome wide association pipeline for the analysis so as to find SNPs associated with MDD.

This research is funded by the Brain Health Programme, Makerere University which I joined after responding to their call to post graduate students at the college of health sciences Makerere University, that required submission of research proposal for assessment. The Brain Health programme has expanded my knowledge in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and psychiatry disorders and have further learned that there is little genetics research that has

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been in Uganda and Africa at large exhibiting a dearth genomic data in this area. I am grateful for this research support programme since it has put forward trainings like ethics, statistical analysis and also made my studying easier as I do not have to look for finances for my research.

I expect to acquire skills on grant and manuscript writing as these are very important for any growing researcher in terms of documenting

and communicating research findings to the scientific community and the other world.

My plan is to finish my research on time and also contribute to the science community by publishing my findings and also establish a network with my fellow trainees on the same programme and coordinators to have more genetics studies in non-communicable diseases done in Uganda.



A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES STARTS WITH ONE STEP"

Joy Louise Gumikiriza-Onoria

How I joined the brain health program.

Great Chinese philosophers once said "A journey of a thousand miles starts with one step" Mine was not different. The journey to joining a PhD program started 7 years ago. As a new recruit in university service, I needed to grow from one level to another, I tried several times, with the help of colleagues, peers and mentors in the department of but was not successful. Frustrated and at the verge of giving up, one of my mentors and a senior colleague encouraged me to join the Alzheimer's research working group. This was my first step to doing low key independent research. I joined the group through a NURTURE career development grant.

The journey was quite interesting, nothing like the Master's research I had done before, very educative, lots of exposure and ultimately an increasing interest in Alzheimer's research. However, all good things come to an end. The career development fellowship came to an end, but this wasn't the end of the day for me. Another short fellowship call was advertised and specifically for Alzheimer's research. Thanks to continuous mentorship from my senior colleague, I saw a low hanging fruit and Alas! I pounced on it to continue research in Alzheimer's disease, as the fellowship was winding up, I realised I had a story to tell from my study findings, I had a tory to further and an exciting career ahead of me. That's when a BRAIN health PhD call came through and together with my mentor, we put our story together and applied for the graduate fellowship. A few months later, I was honoured to be selected among the few that had also been awarded the fellowship.



EDUCATION CHOICES FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER IN A CLINICAL SETTING, FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

Irene Nabitaka,

I am third year Paediatrics Resident at Makerere University College of Health Sciences. I got to know about the Brain Health program scholarship through a classmate who emailed me the advert, and implied that I qualified as she was intrigued by my proposal "Education choices for children with Autism spectrum Disorder in a clinical setting, facilitators and barriers". I researched about the Brain Health program at a wide scope, and I felt I met the criteria for the applicants. I applied for the scholarship and as I waited for feedback from the Brain Health Program, I progressed with my proposal: presented to the Pediatrics department, where I got clearance to proceed to the School of Medicine, Research Ethical Committee (SOMREC) following a few edits.

During my wait for a response, one Thursday evening I received a congratulatory email, as a recipient for the Brain Health Program scholarship, and this has really been a game changer for me in all aspects. I have attained two more supervisors from the program, to add to my prior three supervisors from Makerere University College of Health sciences (MaKChs). One external supervisor: Assistant Professor Molly McVoy from the University Hospitals Cleveland Medical

center, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, and an Internal Supervisor Professor Elly Katabira. from MakChs.

The great enthusiasm and quick responses from my supervisors has enabled me enhance my proposal greatly and make strides. Furthermore, I have benefitted through the research funds that ease the burden of research. I have participated in an online Research Ethics course where I attained a certificate at the end of the course. I have also attended a Non Communicable Disease-Epidemiology workshop that was organized by the Brain Health Program team. I believe at the end of my research, I will be able to publish in a peer review medical journal with the support of the Brain Health program.

I have great interest in Early childhood Development, and I believe if given equal opportunities children with autism have the potential to lead fulfilling lives and to contribute to the social, cultural and economic vitality of their communities. In Uganda, children with autism have been given very little attention. I hope by the end of the study we would explore the

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facilitators and barriers to education choices among children with autism, and the results from this study will be used as a framework for planning and prioritization of resources given that only 1% of Uganda's education budget is allocated to the Special Needs and Inclusive Education department.

The Brain Health scholarship program, will be a stepping stone for my future research career,

knowing that I will receive training in bio-ethics, implementation science, behavioral sciences research, qualitative and quantitative research methodology, data analysis and research management. Furthermore, I hope to get exposure through interaction with experts in the neurodevelopmental field.

This is undeniably a great opportunity that am overwhelmingly grateful for. Thank you for reading!