



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY LUNG INSTITUTE

# Newsletter



Volume 5 Issue 1; May 2022

## Word from the Director



Dear Readers,

In this issue, we have curated articles to highlight our commitment to disseminate information on

activities and new services available at MLI.

This year MLI has focused on increasing its operational capabilities to counter the slow down we experienced during COVID 19. In addition to this, Makerere University Lung Institute now offers more Lung science services compared to the previous years. Visit our clinic at Mulago to find out the variety of services we offer.

In the clinical department, we sourced bronchoscopy equipment and we can now fully conduct Bronchoscopy procedures. We have also developed capacity for early Lung cancer screening and management.

With resumption of schools now, some projects can ably reach out to students in conducting Lung science sensitization.

With thanks to our funders and collaborators, we have been able to push several research projects with some nearing completion and others at different levels of management.

*I wish you an enjoyable read.*

*Science for healthy lungs as we build for the future.*

## Inside....

The ACACIA Approach:  
Educational theatre about  
Asthma



Resumption of Bronchoscopy  
Services at MLI



Makerere University College of  
Health Sciences TB Day Seminar



## Makerere University Lung Institute to support clinical trials on natural therapeutics

Dr. Winters Muttamba, Coordinator – COVID-19 Research Group



HERBAL MEDICINE: Illustrative Only/ Image Credits: Kampala Herbal Clinic



Herbal products have been used all over the world for so many years. These have been used for physical ailments including respiratory infections. In Africa, ... **More on p.2**

## Word from the Editors

We welcome our readers to our first issue of the year 2022. The editorial team is eager to keep you informed about MLI's activities during this year as we strive to improve lung health in the region through the our various research activities and clinical services.

In this issue, we talk about the ongoing herbal medicines clinical, we give insight on the ACACIA project's theatre productions and share how we the World TB was commemorated at the College of Health Sciences.

This quarterly newsletter is available on MLI's website: [mli.mak.ac.ug](http://mli.mak.ac.ug). Subscribe for this newsletter by emailing [news@mak.ac.ug](mailto:news@mak.ac.ug) with 'Subscribe' in the subject. For any comments or questions please reach out to the editorial team.

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LEVERAGING 100 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE  
IN BUILDING A TRANSFORMED SOCIETY

**From p.1** ...more than 80% of communities utilise herbal products as their first line treatment for infections; a pattern similarly observed in East Asian communities.

The role of herbal remedies in treatment of diseases is well documented. There is evidence that these remedies have therapeutic potential. The therapeutic potential is believed to be due to presence of phytochemicals that demonstrate antiviral, anti-inflammatory and immune-modulatory properties.

The wide spread use of these products became more prominent during the COVID-19 outbreak, where many countries and communities called on these herbal/natural products for treatment of COVID-19. In East Asian communities, herbal medicine had been integral in the management of the previous SARS-CoV outbreak in 2002.

Population studies documenting the effects of herbal/natural products in

treatment of illnesses are generally lacking, emphasizing the need for research studies documenting the role of herbal medicine. The African centres for disease control (Africa CDC) has issued a statement to member states by providing guiding statements and one such statement number reads: *“Support the conduct of GCP and good participatory practice guidelines (GPPC) – compliant research to validate the safety and efficacy of the herbal-based traditional medicines”*, calling for the conduct GCP clinical trials to support the use of herbal/natural remedies.

Makerere University Lung Institute has recently undertaken a trial that evaluated the efficacy and safety of a natural therapeutic. The trial code named the UBV-01N trial highlighted the need for a clinical trial platform to rapidly evaluate herbal/natural therapeutic for management of illnesses in Uganda. Building on the UBV-01N trial, MLI has been identified to lead on the establishment of a robust clinical trial platform

to support evaluation of herbal/traditional remedies. The program code named Clinical trials of Natural Therapeutics program (CONAT) will start with therapeutics for acute respiratory viral infections including COVID-19, and gradually expand to include other disease entities.

The CONAT program is funded by the government of Uganda through the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation and the Presidential Initiative on Epidemics (PRESIDE). CONAT will be accomplished through a multidisciplinary approach and collaborative efforts that bring together diverse stakeholders. The work will be accomplished through the clinical trials unit of Makerere University Lung Institute. CONAT will embark on a Multicenter, Multiple arm, Multiple stage Omni Adaptive, Randomized Trial to evaluate the Safety and Efficacy of Natural/Herbal Investigational Therapeutics for the treatment of acute respiratory viral infections including SARS-CoV2 in Uganda.

## The ACACIA Approach: Educational theatre about Asthma

**Dr. Rebecca Nantanda – Paediatrician and Senior Research Fellow, MLI**



**T**he ACACIA (Achieving Control of Asthma in Children In Africa) study is multi-country

study involving 6 countries in sub-Saharan Africa; Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana. The study aims to assess asthma control among children aged 12-14 years in urban schools, explore the barriers to, and facilitators of good asthma control and increase awareness about childhood asthma.

During the past 2 years, there was a lot of focus on increasing awareness about asthma and this was done using different platforms including educative drama performances, talk shows on radio and television as well as scientific sessions to healthcare providers.



**Educational Theatre Plays on Asthma at Kibuli S.S.S.**

The drama shows were conducted in selected secondary schools. The overall aim was to increase awareness of asthma among school-going

adolescents and highlight the roles and responsibilities of the children with asthma, their peers, the teachers and school administration in ensuring that



children with asthma are supported to live normal and productive lives. A total of 8 shows were conducted in four schools. The performances were followed by interactive sessions between the audience and research team regarding asthma, and through these interactions, it was noted that awareness about asthma is still very low, and that there are many myths and misconceptions which are key barriers to control of asthma symptoms. The audience expressed a lot of enthusiasm in learning more about asthma, especially on how they can cope within the school environment, including medical care. Follow up meetings to continue with discussions regarding care of children with asthma within the school environment are planned.

Two similar shows were conducted in the community. An estimated 1600 people were reached using drama shows. Special thanks to the Dynamo Theatre Company that put such a brilliant performance which, in addition to creating awareness about asthma, it was extremely entertaining. Indeed, it was edutainment at its best.

In a bid to increase awareness about childhood asthma in the general population, we conducted health talk shows on Family TV. The health talks were delivered in line with the World Asthma Day theme for 2022 'Closing the gaps in asthma care'. The health talk shows provided a platform to discuss childhood asthma comprehensively, right from understanding asthma,

through risk factors, diagnosis, management and prevention. The shows were live streamed on Facebook and YouTube (add links). Just like the drama shows, the comments from the viewers further highlighted the low awareness about asthma and the preventable suffering that children with asthma, and their parents go through along their life's journey. The healthcare workers who take care of children with asthma were not left out in the drive to increase awareness about asthma in children. A total of 4 scientific sessions were delivered aimed at increasing awareness about childhood asthma and providing updates on approaches to effective asthma care.



Post test assessment after the Theatre plays. Knowledge assessment at Kibuli S.S.S.

## Resumption of Bronchoscopy Services at MLI



**Dr. Alupo Patricia** – Research Fellow, Makerere University Lung Institute

The Makerere University Lung Institute is continuing to offer the best diagnostic and management approaches towards lung health. As a step towards this, the lung institute offered a bronchoscopy training in the month of April, offering the training to the lung institute fellows, fellows

from Mbarara hospital and those from the department of cardiothoracic surgery in Mulago National Referral Hospital.

Bronchoscopy is a procedure where we look directly into the lung using a thin lighted tube with an attached tiny camera (Bronchoscope). It can be conducted with local anesthesia (meaning the patient is awake and

fully alert throughout the procedure though discomfort is minimized) or under moderate sedation, and one needs to fast for about 8 hours before the procedure is conducted. This procedure is useful in the evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of certain pulmonary conditions like infections, cancers and interstitial lung diseases where more conservative approaches are not yielding satisfactory results.

It is also the treatment modality of choice in certain conditions like removal of foreign bodies in the lungs.

Makerere University Lung Institute aims to avail this service at an affordable cost to benefit the larger patient population that may need this service but not able to obtain it,

or afford it. To ensure this service is availed within a reasonable period of time, the MLI conducted this training on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2022 as a follow up to another training that was conducted in 2019 and during this training, the trainees underwent didactic sessions and practical simulations and this culminated into

conducting bronchoscopy procedures on some patients that would benefit from the service. The training was led by expert bronchoscopists and interventional pulmonologists from Johns Hopkins university and the Victoria Common Wealth University in the United states of America.

## Makerere University College of Health Sciences TB Day Seminar

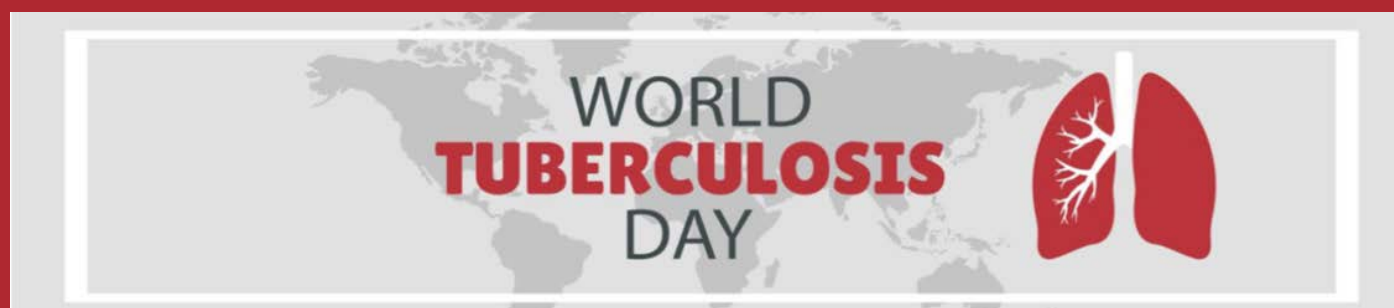
**Muwonge Denis (Communications Officer, MLI) & Milly Nattimba (Communications Practitioner)**

Every year on March 24, the world unites to mark World TB Day. The day is meant to build public awareness about the global TB epidemic and efforts to eliminate the disease.

This year the theme is “Invest to End TB. Save Lives.” The theme was selected in recognition of the persistently low funding levels for TB interventions and programs, especially in low- and middle-income countries like Uganda. In addition to the low financial resources, countries are experiencing significant shortages in human resources as well as gaps in policy and guidelines on how to especially make access to services by under-served populations, easier.

To mark the day, the Makerere University Lung Institute at the College of Health Sciences, through the LIGHT research project is organised a seminar for students and faculty at Makerere University College of Health Sciences - Davis Lecture Theatre with Dr Bruce Kirenga as one of the keynote speakers. The seminar had participation from students and faculty from universities within Kampala, including Kampala International University, Kyambogo University, Victoria University, King Caesor University, among others

The objective for this seminar was to engage students at an early stage in their training/career to understand key gender issues in access to TB treatment and care. They will also contribute to the discussion on the actions needed to be undertaken to address these issues.



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