



The Center for Social Science Research on AIDS (CeSSRA) is a training and research collaboration between researchers at Makerere University (MUK) and the Joint Clinical Research Centre (JCRC) in Kampala, Uganda, at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) in Mbarara, Uganda, and at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. CeSSRA began in September 2007 through funding from the National Institute of Health (R24HD056917). CeSSRA is housed in the Department of Anthropology at Case Western Reserve University and the Faculty of Social Sciences at Makerere University in Kampala. The CeSSRA Kampala office is open Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm.

New Website:

A website for CeSSRA was recently created: <http://www.case.edu/artsci/anth/CeSSRA.html>
Check our new website for information about CeSSRA's mission, personnel, activities, fellows' profiles, and past newsletters!



Participants listening to Dr. Ajay Sethi's presentation on alcohol and HIV on 6 August 2008

RECENT EVENTS

The center organized a public talk entitled ***“Understanding the Links between Alcohol and HIV”*** presented by Dr. Ajay Sethi from the Department of Population and Health Sciences, University of

Wisconsin-Madison. The public talk took place on 6th August 2008 in Faculty of Social Sciences-MUK. The presentation was also part of the fellows' training as a module of the AIDS 201 Series.

The talk was well attended with over 60 people from many institutions and groups including: Makerere University, Members of the Press, Gulu University, Infectious Disease Institute, The AIDS Support Organization (TASO), CeSSRA Research Fellows, and CeSSRA staff. Those who attended were lecturers, postgraduate and undergraduate students, medical personnel, teaching assistants, directors of various organizations, newspaper reporters and many others.

Summary of Dr. Sethi's presentation:

In 2005, the World Health Organization listed Uganda as having the highest adult per capita alcohol consumption worldwide. While poor estimation of traditional brew drinking (~90% of total consumption) makes Uganda's #1 rank questionable, it is believed that alcohol continues to fuel the HIV epidemic.

Many cultural aspects of alcohol consumption that may lead to HIV transmission remain uncharacterized. In this ongoing qualitative and epidemiologic research, there was an underlying frustration regarding Uganda's #1 ranking. Societal ills equated with alcohol included poverty, unemployment, and violence. Women drank less than men, felt less comfortable drinking publicly, and reported drinking to avoid conflicts at home. Perceived positive aspects of drinking that were reported included socializing, relaxation, treatment of fever and stomach pain following delivery.

Direct attribution of HIV to alcohol was reported often and quitting alcohol was typical after someone became infected. Having money was tied to the amount drunk, number of visits to bars, beverage types, and bingeing among those who had less than steady income. Bars were described as places to “easily fall in love with women” and owners hired “beautiful women as bar attendants [to] attract young men to go those places.” The social pathways to HIV risk associated with alcohol use differed for men and women in this setting where sexual networking is characterized by casual sex often of a transactional nature. Formal drinking venues/bars that constitute the modal cultural pattern of alcohol consumption are frequented mostly by males who perceive alcohol as an “energizer” for meeting potential partners (men only; “everyone looks beautiful in the bar”). Alcohol use is perceived as a form of social analgesic associated with “forgetting” or “feeling better” about problems. And patterns of alcohol use differ between

males and females, gender differences should be a primary starting point in the design of an intervention targeting alcohol consumption.

UPCOMING PUBLIC CeSSRA EVENTS

Dr. David Kaawa-Mafigiri will be presenting an overview of the International AIDS Society Conference, held in Mexico City during August. He and several other researchers will share their work and give an update on social science research from the conference. Date and time to be announced.

PROFILE

This month we are featuring an Academic Profile of one of our CeSSRA Investigators Ajay K Sethi, Ph.D., MHS. Dr. Sethi is an Assistant Professor of Population Health Sciences in the School of Medicine and Public Health at the University of Wisconsin- Madison. He received his B.S in Physiology from the University of Maryland, his M.H.S. in Molecular Microbiology and Immunology from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and his Ph.D. in Infections Disease Epidemiology.



Research Interests:

Dr. Sethi's research interests lie broadly in the study of infectious diseases. In U.S.-based studies, he collaborates with colleagues to design studies to examine the transmission of hospital-acquired infections. His own research is mainly conducted in international contexts. In urban areas of Uganda, he studies how culture and patterns of alcohol use is associated with transmission of HIV as well as tuberculosis. He also studies how substance use and non-adherence to antiretroviral therapy influence HIV treatment outcomes. In rural Uganda, using a quasi-experimental design, Dr. Sethi and his colleagues are addressing distance to health facilities as a barrier to adherence to antiretroviral therapy by creating and evaluating a mobile antiretroviral pharmacy. For more information, please contact him via e-mail: aksethi@wisc.edu.

FELLOWS EVENTS

Research Design Course:

The center has organized series of online/web-based Research Design and Methodology interactive lectures with fellows beginning early September through December 2008. This training will be a combination of in-person sessions at the CeSSRA office and web sessions at Uganda Management

Institute. The classroom/in-person sessions will be at the time of the regularly scheduled fellows meetings (last Friday of the month) and web-based sessions two weeks before. The first web-based session will be held 12 September at 5:45pm at UMI. All fellows are encouraged to attend!

Presentation in the next Monthly meeting

Mr. George Kitatta will present a paper entitled "*Effects of AIDS on families: A case study of Child-headed households in Rakai District*, in our next fellows meeting on the 29th August 2008 in CeSSRA Office at 5pm. All fellows are invited to attend.

RESOURCES AND OTHER EVENTS

Uganda Society for Health Scientists is organising a manuscript writing skills workshop scheduled on **24th to 26th September 2008**. This is an opportunity for fellows and other independent researchers to improve their writing skills in order to have publishable manuscripts or accepted abstracts. Check the website for details.

Congratulatory Message!

CeSSRA congratulates Dr. Elly Katabira, Associate Professor of Medicine in faculty of Medicine at MUK in Uganda upon his appointment as new President- Elect of the International AIDS Society.

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The centre also congratulates Professor Peter Mugenyi, currently the Director of JCRC, Kampala upon his appointment as the new Chancellor for MUST.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For any questions regarding this Newsletter or CeSSRA activities, please contact:

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