

# "Screening for Neuro-developmental Disabilities in a Developing Country: Challenges and Suggestions for the Way Forward"

*Wednesday, January 4, 2012, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. United States Eastern Time*

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As a neuro-pediatrician who has mostly worked in sub-Saharan Africa for my entire professional career, I have extensive experience in developmental disabilities and community-based pediatric studies among Ugandan children. I have developed a number of research collaborations with investigators from both resource rich and resource poor countries.

I have recently completed a community survey for screening of neurodevelopmental disabilities (focusing on cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism spectrum disorder, visual/hearing impairments, cognitive impairment and speech and language delay) in peri-urban and rural Uganda. I am currently pursuing my doctorate studies in the field of cerebral palsy.

*ABSTRACT: Dr. Kakooza together with Dr. Judith Grether (a perinatal epidemiologist with expertise in designing and implementing population-based surveillance and etiologic studies of developmental disabilities) and other Ugandan and United States colleagues conducted a two-year pilot project in one urban and one rural community in Uganda. The aim of the research study was to establish and evaluate a three-stage system for surveillance of moderate to severe neuro developmental disabilities (NDDs) (autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, mental retardation, speech and language disorders, visual impairment, and hearing impairment) among 2-9 year old children in two pilot communities in Uganda. The additional aim was to establish an effective inter-disciplinary collaborative network of Ugandan and international clinicians/epidemiologists.*

*The first stage of case ascertainment involved door-to-door screening using a brief caregiver questionnaire previously implemented in other developing countries and adapted for use in Uganda. The second stage of case ascertainment involved full clinical assessments of children who screened positive and a sample of those who screened negative by a medical officer. The third stage involved confirmatory examinations of the disability conducted by specialists based*

*at Mulago National Referral Hospital. Appropriate interventions were offered to children based on standard Ugandan paediatric protocols. Data from the three-stage screening and assessment is currently being analyzed to evaluate the psychometric properties of the screening tool, to estimate prevalence of developmental disabilities among 2-9 year old children in Uganda, and to evaluate the feasibility of expanding screening and assessment to other areas of Uganda. These activities were planned and implemented in consultation with a Technical Advisory Group convened for this project.*

*This webinar will focus on the challenges of screening for neuro-developmental disabilities in a developing country with some suggestions for the way forward.*