



CALL FOR PHD AND POST DOC SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS IN PUBLIC HEALTH

The Directorate of Research and Innovations at University of Rwanda through funding by European and Developing Countries Clinical Trial Partnership (EDCTP) to Eastern Africa Consortium for Clinical Trial (EACCR2) implements a study that use point of care viral load (PoC VL) monitoring intervention to improve virological suppression among children and adolescents (age 0-19 years).

I. Role and description

The UNAIDS developed the 90-90-90 strategy to end the HIV/AIDS pandemic by 2020. The third 90 focus on those on treatment having a viral suppression. To achieve the third 90, the WHO recommends six-month viral load monitoring for suppression. Monitoring of viral suppression enables appropriate use of ART and encourage adherence and prevent development of drug resistance. Rational use and adherence to ART preserves the more affordable first and second line of treatment options in resource-poor settings. One of the barriers to effective VL monitoring is the standardized care approach of centralized VL testing done at specialized laboratories. The turnaround time, for HIV VL test and result, related logistical challenges, can hinder early initiation or continuum of HIV healthcare.

PoC/ VL monitoring is novel approach that has been validated and eliminates most of the challenges associated with centralized VL monitoring including potential delays and logistical challenges. The project aims to examine the feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness of using point of care viral load (PoC/ VL) monitoring among children and adolescents living with HIV in East Africa. Additionally, perception and attitude of study participants to use of PoC for HIV VL monitoring will be explored.

Role of PhD fellow

Reporting to the local PI, the PhD fellow will be the trial Coordinator and supervise a team of Research Assistants and assessment team implementing day-to-day activities. She/he will actively participate in scientific research assessing the perception and the psychosocial aspects of using PoC VL to monitor virological suppression. The PhD fellow will require frequently travel between investigative sites and as part of PhD courses in Karolinska Institute in Sweden.



This project is being conducted in conjunction with Karolinska Institute, Sweden, Kilimanjaro Clinical Research Institute Tanzania, Uganda National Health Research Organization, Kenya Medical Research Institute, National Institute for Medical Research Tanzania, UVRI, AIGHD. Specifically, the PhD fellow will be responsible for:

- Lead the process of obtaining relevant ethical approvals in Rwanda
- Ensure trial objectives are clearly described and achieved
- Develop the protocol management plan and coordinate the development of relevant operational plans
- Oversee and monitor all aspects of the conduct of the trial component focusing on psychosocial support service delivery
- Conduct robust research literature review to gather enough information to support evidence synthesis of research investigating HIV/AIDS and cultural adaptation with regard to psychosocial support services in low and middle income countries
- Prepare, write and edit scientific manuscripts in conjunction with local PI and research coordinated and contribute to the body of knowledge
- Ensure research reports are of high quality and submitted on time
- Maintain good relations with stakeholders, partners and collaborators
- Ensure effective, ongoing and regular communication between trial team members
- Effectively manage the operational budget, work closely with financial team on quarterly budget reviews
- Contribute to training and mentoring initiatives for research assistants and assessment teams
- Actively participate in development and contextualization of a package of minimal psychosocial support services
- Establish system, processes for reporting, data management and tracking collected data from selected investigative sites
- Lead implementation of formative research involving health professional, caregivers and population of interest
- Assess eligibility of participants for inclusion in the study and conduct proper consent procedures for study participation
- Assist with the production of implementation guidance for adapting, delivering, supervising and monitoring psychosocial support services in diverse settings.
- Lead community engagement efforts including qualitative research to understand context and adaptation of assessment tool
- **Develop and validate user-friendly screening tool for both caregiver and target group**
- Serve as
- Support recruit, capacity building activities to local research team including research assistants and assessment team
- Provide oversight to assessment activities at site-level and ensure that data are recorded, uploaded, and shared on time



- Participate in training assessment team and routinely share experiences and best practices to improve data collection processes.
- Lead the development and pilot testing of micro-interventions in local investigative sites.
- Perform other duties as assigned by the supervisor or their nominees.

Role of Post doc fellow

The post doc fellow will specifically have roles related to objective (4): To gain insight in the psychosocial effects of PoC-VL monitoring on children and adolescents living with HIV and their caregivers. We will execute a formative research phase, an action research phase and a proof-of-concept research phase (WP3). Essential qualifications, skills and experience for the post include a PhD in Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology or similar field; a strong track record in quantitative and qualitative or ethnographic methods and a special interest in mental health. You will have experience of working with communities in low-resource settings and/or low- and middle-income countries. Ideally, you will have experience of working on randomized controlled trials of mental health or psychosocial interventions. Specifically, the Post doc fellow will be responsible for:

- Contribute to cultural adaptation and use standardized surveys to measure anxiety, depression, wellbeing, among, other relevant indicators and will psychometrically validate these tools for the East-African context (Task 1).
- Provide supportive supervision of data collection in all four Rwanda sites.
- Co-authoring on publications and reports arising from the work package activity
- Coordinate the development of a tool to predict which child-adolescent/caregiver dyads are at risk for poor user satisfaction and poor future retainment in care and drug adherence and would thus benefit from additional psycho-social support services.
- Supervise the psychometric validation of the screening tool against the same standardized questionnaires used in (Task 1) in the two Rwandan intervention sites.
- Supervise the development and pilot test micro-interventions in the two Rwandan intervention sites.
- Coordinate as required with the wider EAPOC-VL project activities, ensuring timely sharing of information and supportive working.
- Liaise with senior academics, nominated research assistants, representatives from the HIV node of the EACCR2 and Abbott to deliver on work package objectives.
- Make decisions on the day-to-day management and coordination of work package 3 activities and coordinate with in-country line managers and wider academic supervisors for support where required.
- Prepare information and reports for internal and external communication as required.
- You may also be required to carry out such other duties, commensurate with the grading of the post, as may be assigned by the supervisors or their nominees.



II. Call for application

We call applicants for 1 PhD and 1 Post doc fully funded positions for a duration of 3.5 years.

III. Funding

The successful candidates will receive a monthly living allowance (stipend) for the period of 3.5 years. Additional benefits include field allowances (mission fee) and any other research expenses following the UR standards/guidelines.

IV. Application requirements

1. PhD position

<u>PERSON SPECIFICATION</u>		
ESSENTIAL CRITERIA		DESIRABLE CRITERIA
(Identified from – Application form, CV, Supporting Statement, Interview, References)		
EXPERIENCE		
1.	Demonstrated experience in qualitative research methods.	
2.	Demonstrated experience in quantitative research methods.	Experience of being involved in a randomised controlled trial.
3.	Experience of working in low resource settings and/or low-income countries.	
4.	Experience of taking informed consent to participate in research.	Experience of obtaining institutional ethical review approvals.
5.	Experience of administering mental health assessments.	Experience of working on a mental health and psychosocial support intervention.



EDUCATION, QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING		
1.	Master's degree in public health, Medicine, Nursing, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, or similar field.	
SKILLS, GENERAL AND SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE		
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Strong project management skills and ability to deliver on assigned tasks within deadlines- Evidence of successfully managing to completion funded research project- Proven ability to manage multidisciplinary clinical trial teams to deliver at high quality, on time and within budget- Proficiency with Microsoft office suite (excel, word, PowerPoint, outlook)- Experience collecting data using electronic data collection form- Excellent written and verbal skills.	
PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES AND CIRCUMSTANCES		
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Proven ability to prioritize and time manage work activities, work to deadlines and demonstrate initiative.- Proven ability to work independently and as part of a team.- Proven ability to effectively communicate research findings to a diverse range of stakeholders.	



2. Post doc position

<u>Person Specification</u>		
ESSENTIAL CRITERIA		DESIRABLE CRITERIA
(Identified from – Application form, CV, Supporting Statement, Interview, References)		
EXPERIENCE		
1.	Experience in qualitative research methods.	Experience of using anthropological methods including ethnographic fieldwork.
2.	Experience in quantitative research methods.	Experience of being involved in a randomised controlled trial.
3.	Experience of working in low resource settings and/or low-income countries.	Experience in writing up qualitative and/or psychology research (or a related field) for publication or presentation.
4.	Experience of taking informed consent to participate in research.	Experience of obtaining institutional ethical review approvals.
5.	Experience of administering mental health assessments.	Experience of working in mental health settings.
EDUCATION, QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING		
1.	PhD degree in Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology or similar field.	
2.	Further qualifications in psychology or a related field at post-graduate level e.g. MSc, MA, MRes PhD.	Training in research ethics.
SKILLS, GENERAL AND SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE		
1.	Excellent organisational skills demonstrated by ability to deliver to deadline.	
2.	Excellent written and verbal skills.	



PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Proven ability to prioritise and time manage work activities, work to deadlines and demonstrate initiative.	Ability to work effectively as part of an international and cross-cultural multidisciplinary team.
Proven ability to work independently and as part of a team.	
Proven ability to effectively communicate research findings to a diverse range of stakeholders.	

V. Application file

- (1) Application letter addressed to the Director of the Centre Postgraduate Studies at UR with a copy to the Project PI-Dr. Stefan Jansen.
- (2) A curriculum vitae.
- (3) A copy of degrees and transcripts
- (4) A recent passport photo and a copy of ID or passport

VI. Selection methodology

An interview will be organized for candidates fulfilling the requirements.

VII. How to apply and key dates

- (1) Applicants are requested to send documents as listed above by email to the scholarship officer (ur-cpgscholarship@ur.ac.rw) at UR-CPGS, and a copy to sjansen.ur@gmail.com (Project PI).
- (2) Deadline for application: Friday, 30th December 2021

For more information, contact:

- (1) Project PI, Dr Stefan Jansen, sjansen.ur@gmail.com , Phone: 0784575900

Done at Kigali, December 09th, 2021



Prof. Nosa O. Egiebor
Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research
University of Rwanda