

Dealing with COVID: MicroResearch goes Virtual

With ongoing limitations for international travel, our team has been looking for new, innovative ways to offer the MicroResearch program. Starting this fall, we will be offering redesigned, virtual versions of our workshops.

- **Train the trainers workshop:** An opportunity for future MicroResearch lecturers and coaches to become familiar with the program and the curriculum. This workshop format will be particularly instrumental at new workshop sites.
- **Writing workshop:** Lectures and activities aimed at strengthening writing skills to prepare researchers for the publication process. This workshop is intended for MicroResearch graduates who have data collected and analyzed and are beginning the writing process. Participants are broken into small groups, where they work both individually and together to identify the "golden nugget" in their findings.
- **MicroResearch workshop:** Our traditional, 40-hour workshop. This workshop will include virtual presentations and group work conducted via video-conference. Like our regular workshops, participants will be broken into teams to conceptualize and design a research project.

If you would like to learn more about how to get involved in our new virtual workshops, please contact us at MicroResearch@dal.ca.



Thank you to all the 2020 MicroResearch reviewers, coaches, facilitators, advisory committee members, and volunteers!

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"Apart from the research and academic achievements, I got a new network of friends through mentorship, through those teams that we create because MicroResearch, you create interdisciplinary teams."

- MR Participant from Mbarara, Uganda

New COVID-related MicroResearch projects



With the ongoing global pandemic, comes new community health challenges and issues to be explored. MicroResearch grants offer a unique opportunity to examine the impact of COVID-19 through small-scale funding of community-led projects. Our most recent research proposal submissions included three COVID-19 related projects, all by researchers in Mbarara, Uganda who have already completed a MicroResearch project. The projects include:

- Social and Psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in selected communities in Mbarara municipality, South Western Uganda
- Voices of young adolescents in schools regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and prevention measures: A qualitative study in South Western Uganda
- Determinants of Intimate Partner Violence Disclosure among Pregnant Women in Forcibly Displaced Settlements during the COVID 19 Pandemic in Kasese District

All three of these projects have been issued full approval from MicroResearch and the teams are currently in the process of obtaining approval from their local research ethics committee, have started data collection, or are in the process of analyzing the data.

To see more updates and to download a summary booklet of active MicroResearch projects, visit www.microresearch.ca/projects.

COVID-19 Project Abstract

Project team lead Elizabeth Kemigisha will present her team's MR COVID-related project at the 16th Annual Uganda Paediatric Association Scientific Conference this October:

Adolescent experiences following school closures due to COVID-19 lockdown: A qualitative study employing mailbox technique in Southwest Uganda

Background: The social impact of school closures on children due to Covid 19 outbreak has been under reported especially in LMICs. We conducted a qualitative study to determine 1) knowledge of Covid 19 disease, spread and prevention among young adolescents 2) adolescent experiences during lockdown and school closure.

Methods: We conducted a qualitative study using mail technique in August 2020. We recruited 80 adolescents aged 10 to 15 years from the urban and rural areas in Mbarara district. The participant selection and collection of letters was aided by village health team members.

Results: Of the 82 participants, 47% were male and majority of participants live in a rural setting (61%). Adolescents demonstrated sufficient knowledge on Covid prevention measures. Reported positive experiences included learning new house-chores and life-skills, adapting to media based virtual learning with more available options in urban setting and improved family connection. However, the negative experiences reported included psychological issues such as worry and fear of the fate of education or of death by disease. They also reported gaps home based learning including limited access to education materials, one sided learning and lack of time to concentrate on studying. Others included economic consequences of lockdown with lack of essential needs, exposure to risks including reported cases of teenage pregnancy.

Conclusion: Despite the perceived prevention gains of school closures, school-going adolescents especially those without the family support and resources have had their education severely affected. Some with far-reaching negative outcomes such as teenage pregnancy and widening social inequalities.

Canada's COVID-19 Vaccine Response

MicroResearch stands in support of the joint statement put out by the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research (CCGHR) and the Canadian Society for International Health (CSIH) regarding equitable access to a COVID-19 vaccine globally. As stated in the call to action: "Canadian leaders in global health call upon Canada to work in global solidarity with World Health Organization (WHO) and partners to end the COVID-19 crisis by supporting the global [COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility] and adopting coherent policies to halt vaccine nationalism."

Visit the CCGHR site to view the full joint statement: <https://www.ccghr.ca/joint-ccghr-csih-statement-call-action-defeating-covid-19-calls-global-solidarity-vaccine-power-play/>

Research Funding Opportunities

Applying for second MicroResearch grants

Did you know that MicroResearch graduates can apply for a second grant upon completion of their first project? We strongly encourage MicroResearchers to continue to ask questions and explore local community health issues through small research projects.

Cascading MicroResearch Teachings



*A group of Obstetrics and Gynecology residents in Kigali, Rwanda learning about how to define a research question using MR curriculum materials, August, 2020.
Photo submitted by Dr. Polyphile Ntihinyurwa, a 2018 MR workshop graduate from the University of Rwanda*

Project team lead (PTL) requirements:

- Must hold certificate of attendance from a MR workshop
- Must be a member on a team that has completed a MR project
- Must not be an active member of another MR team
- Must complete Good Clinical Practices training
- Must complete the Writing Skills modules on the MR curriculum website

Project team requirements:

- Team must consist of at least 3 members
- At least one other team member must hold a MR certificate of attendance
- Team must be made up of at least 3 different professional backgrounds

Steps to Renew a Dormant Project

Involved in a MR project that fizzled out? We understand that life and other competing priorities can often get in the way of research. However, we encourage teams to revive projects that have become dormant by following these steps:

- 1** Contact the original team members to ensure they want to remain involved. Teams must meet all the requirements of MR projects: PTL must hold a MR certificate; team must consist of at least 3 members, 2 of which have MR certificates; team must be made up of at least 3 different professional backgrounds.
- 2** Contact MicroResearch (MicroResearch@dal.ca) about renewing a project, include the names and emails of any new team members.
- 3** MicroResearch will contact the international and site coaches to ensure they are want to remain involved.
- 4** The team can continue working on the step their project was previously on!

IMPORTANT DEADLINE!

MicroResearch
International grant
application deadline:
November 1, 2020



Knowledge Translation Grants

One key element of successful research that makes a difference is a well-thought out knowledge translation plan. This involves strategies on how to present major findings to key stakeholders and bring the knowledge to the community.

Once a team successfully completes a MR project and has published their findings, they have the opportunity to apply for a Knowledge Translation (KT) grant through MicroResearch. This grant offers a maximum of \$1,000 (CAD) to be used for a KT plan, which may include expenses for event planning, promotional materials, and communications costs.

Teams looking for further funding for KT will have to outline their strategies and plan on the application, describing the target audience, how they plan to connect with this audience, and the intended outcomes and objectives of the KT plan.

KT grant applications are accepted year-round and undergo the same peer-review process of other MR grants.

For more information on MicroResearch grants and to download the application forms, visit www.microresearch.ca/apply-for-a-grant.

MicroResearch and Research in Medicine Collaborations

Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine offers a Research in Medicine program requirement for all medical students. The program focuses on expanding research skills and providing opportunities for future medical professionals to get involved in health research. MicroResearch has used the RIM program as an opportunity to explore key issues pertaining to community health research in developing countries. The following projects have been developed in partnership between MicroResearch and Research in Medicine students.

Research Ethics Process in Developing Countries

RIM student: Rania Fashir



The operations of research ethics committees in developing countries can impact the progress of research teams conducting minimal-risk studies, specifically when faced with delays in the review and monitoring process.

This RIM project's objectives were to look at the review processes and any challenges that may impede researchers' ability to conduct studies. The methods included a literature review of research ethics codes and a questionnaire with key directors and with researchers to better understand their experiences. Findings show that researchers felt delays in ethics approval processing times were an adversity. The high cost of administrative fees associated with ethics review was also identified as being a concern.

Identifying Predatory Journals Recruitment Techniques

RIM student: Rumana Rafiq

Predatory journals are for-profit entities that pose as credible publishers, but in actuality lack the rigor and legitimacy of peer-reviewed, academic journals. With the growing number of predatory publishers, it can be difficult for novice researchers to publish their findings in reputable academic journals. Researchers from low-income countries (LICs) are particularly vulnerable to predatory journals, who tend to target these groups through specific recruitment techniques.

This RIM project looks at how predatory journals communicate with researchers from LICs compared to high-income countries (HICs) with the goal of identifying their recruitment techniques. These findings will help researchers in LICs identify and avoid publishing in predatory journals.



MicroResearch Qualitative Program Evaluation

RIM student: Sage Dixon

In order to continually evolve and improve the MicroResearch program, we conduct evaluation questionnaires before and after each workshop. This gives participants a voice and the opportunity for suggestions to better organize and structure the workshops to fit their needs.

However, the workshops and program may influence and affect participants' lives in other, less tangible ways. For this reason we are interested in exploring how it has impacted participants' and volunteers' personal, professional, and community lives. This qualitative evaluation is focused on the MicroResearch Nova Scotia program, however, we have piloted the interviews in Uganda and have plans to conduct a similar study in 2021 for participants and coaches involved in MicroResearch International.



New Publication from a MR Knowledge Translation Grant

Ivan Mugisha Taremwa, Scholastic Ashaba, Carlrona Ayebazibwe, Imelda Kemeza, Harriet Ochokoru Adrama, Daniel Omoding, Jane Yatuha & Robert Hilliard (2020) Mind the gap: scaling up the utilization of insecticide treated mosquito nets using a knowledge translation model in Isingiro district, rural south western Uganda, Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine, 8:1, 383-397, DOI: [10.1080/21642850.2020.1814782](https://doi.org/10.1080/21642850.2020.1814782)

Background: The phenomenon of Knowledge Translation (KT) is a key intervention towards bridging the 'know-do' gap. We conducted a KT initiative in Isingiro district to positively change attitude and improve on the uptake of Insecticide Treated Mosquito Nets (ITNs) as a malaria prevention strategy.

Methods: This was a community based interactive initiative that was carried out within the seventeen administrative units of Isingiro district using varied dissemination activities, namely: health talks; drama activities, and the sharing of ITNs success stories.

Results: We reached out to 34 dissemination groups, comprising communal gathering, religious crusades, open markets, secondary schools, and district administration. In addition, we spot-visited 46 households to ascertain the physical presence of ITNs, and their appropriate use. The major intervention was improved knowledge base of malaria causation and prevention strategies. The indicators for improved knowledge were hinged on the five-interventions, namely: (a) communal sensitization on malaria to provide, (b) monitoring and support of selected households, (c) emphasis of ITN use as a malaria prevention strategy, (d) promotion of care for ITNs, and (e) promotion of ITN use. In all, the major output was improved knowledge base of malaria causation and prevention strategies by providing accurate information to redress the myths and misconceptions related to malaria and ITNs use.

Conclusion: This undertaking describes a consolidated community intervention to promote ITN utilization. It is plausible that this intervention positively enhances and promotes uptake and utilization of ITNs.

"What I have learned [through MR] has benefited me to the greatest extent because one, I have transformed into a better thinker in terms of the community challenges, but I have also been able to get active and involved into addressing some of these challenges within the funds that are available through MicroResearch."

- MR Participant from Mbarara, Uganda



Louisa Horne of Rotary Club of Halifax Harbourside presenting to the local Rotary Club in Mbarara, Uganda in February, 2020.

Rotary Clubs and MicroResearch

Providing grants to MicroResearch teams to conduct research projects requires support from community organizations, both in Canada and at the local site. The Rotary Clubs of Atlantic Canada have been instrumental donors to MicroResearch by funding teams in Mbarara, Uganda. Strengthening this relationship is the contribution of the Rotary Club in Mbarara, which provides further funds to cover administrative and research ethics fees to the teams. Fostering partnerships between local community organizations will be a key strategy in maintaining sustainability of the program going forward. We hope to connect with local Rotary Clubs at more sites in the future

Thank you to all our partners and supporters!



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**Please consider donating your time or resources,
visit www.microresearch.ca for more information.**