

NeuroGAP Newsletter

January 2024

NeuroGAP-Psychosis:

Professor Lukoye Atwoli has received one of the highest honors of health and medicine. In October, Atwoli was elected to be an international member of the [National Academy of Medicine](#) for his contributions to “mental health care, policy, education, and epidemiology globally, for leading African and global medical and psychiatric associations, for leading two innovative medical schools in Africa as dean, and for co-chairing the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s Board on Global Health, among other achievements.”

Prof Atwoli has also contributed to a new book, [Exploring and Exploiting Genetic Risk for Psychiatric Disorders](#). Prof co-authored a chapter on gene discovery and delineating additional risk factors. Many of the contributors to the book are leaders in the Psychiatric Genomics Consortium and at the Stanley Center, including Elise Robinson.

Congratulations to Dr. Yanga Thungana (Walter Sisulu University) and Dr. Claire Kwagala (Makerere University) for publishing their papers on the NeuroGAP-Psychosis study data. Yanga and Claire analyzed the psychometric properties of the Psychosis Screening Questionnaire in South Africa and Uganda, respectively. Read the papers here:

- Kwagala C, Ametaj A, Kim HH, Kyebuzibwa J, Okura R, Stevenson A, Gelaye B, Akena D. [Factor structure of psychosis screening questionnaire in Ugandan adults](#). BMC Psychiatry. 2024.
- Thungana Y, Zingela Z, van Wyk S, Kim HH, Ametaj A, Stevenson A, Stroud RE, Stein DJ, Gelaye B. [Psychosis screening questionnaire: Exploring its factor structure among South African adults](#). S Afr J Psychiatr. 2023.

GINGER:

The GINGER program continued virtual classrooms from September through December, 2023, covering topics such as Characterizing GWAS and Polygenic Risk Score prediction. Fellows also prepared for the World Congress of Psychiatric Genetics meeting in Montreal, Canada in October 2023. Along with GINGER team members, fellows Barkot Milkias and Megan Campbell presented on behalf of GINGER fellows during a GINGER-led symposium titled “Beyond Borders: Integrating Training and Research for Scientific Excellence and Global Equity”.



Megan Campbell presenting on behalf of GINGER

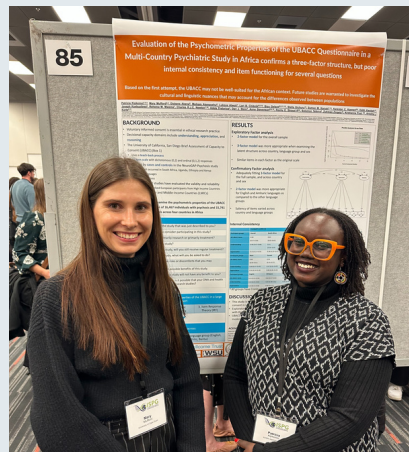
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GINGER:

The symposium discussed the importance of integrating training with research and presented results from two of three GINGER phenotype data papers. GINGER was joined for the symposium by Marco Sanabrais of NeuroMEX, who presented original research, as well as Paola Giusti-Rodríguez from the Ancestral Populations Network and University of Florida, who served as moderator. The third phenotype paper was presented as a poster by fellows Mary Mufford and Patricia Kipkemoi. Following the World Congress, fellows Megan Campbell and Engida Girma traveled with Kristi Post and Rocky Stroud II to Washington, DC to present research at the Global Brains meeting led by the NIMH.



GINGER Fellows lunch



Mary Mufford and Patricia Kipkemoi

NEUROGENE:

We would like to extend our congratulations to the Prof Eunice Kamaara et al for the following abstract that was presented at the last Ampath Research Conference in Kenya.

“Contradictions of Digital Mental Health Innovations for Young people in Kenya and their ethical implications”

Eunice Kamaara, David Nderitu, Eric Masese, Lucy Kiyiapi, Sarah Wawa, Dismas Oketch, Julius Sigei, Lukoye Atwoli

We would also like to congratulate the AEWG for having their proposal accepted for a symposium to be held during the International Association of Bioethics World Congress which will be Qatar in 2024. The symposium will focus on the different empirical ethics research projects that are coordinated under the African Ethics Working group (AEWG) and NeuroGenE (Global Initiative in Neuropsychiatric Ethics). The symposium will explore the multi-layered ethical challenges around psychiatry and neurodevelopmental diagnosis, prevention, and intervention. It will highlight the crucial emergent ethical issues in African neuropsychiatric genomics and mental health.

The following abstracts were also accepted for the 17th World Congress of Bioethics

Lessons from use of University of California Brief Assessment of Capacity to Consent Questionnaire in a Psychiatric Genomics Study in Kenya

Violet Naanyu et al

Religious and cultural perspectives on euthanasia: A comparison of Islamic and Buddhist traditions

Violet Naanyu et al

Additionally The Feminist Approaches to Bioethics conference 2024 accepted Prof Violet Naanyu's abstract on **Bioethics, social problems, and domestic violence.**

NeuroDev:

The SA NeuroDev team members attended the 5th International Developmental Pediatrics Association (IDPA) Congress in Johannesburg, South Africa on 28th November – 01 December 2023 and presented the following:

- 'Returning individual genetic results to research participants: experiences of stigma in south african families with neurodevelopmental disorders' ~ oral by Nolene Chetty
- 'The neurodev project: phenotypic and genetic characterisation of neurodevelopmental disorders in kenya and south africa' ~ oral by Patricia Kipkemoi
- 'Emotional and behavioural difficulties in children with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders in south africa' ~ poster by Michal Zieff
- 'Clinical investigations in children with developmental disorders: a descriptive study on a lmic cohort' ~ oral by Este Sauerma
- 'Seizures in children with neurodevelopmental delays in a cohort recruited in the western cape of south africa' ~ poster by Emma Eastman
- 'Assessing the performance of the 3di-sv as a screening tool for autism spectrum disorder in a south african context' ~ poster by Zamazimba Madi
- Zandre participated in symposium panel about returning individual genetic results to research participants.

The NeuroDev study continues to enroll participants at KEMRI-WT and AKU in Kenya, and has recently expanded recruitment into new sub-counties. Expansion into Mombasa County has long been a goal of the team at KEMRI.

The KEMRI team welcomed two new clinicians, Nancy Happiness and Margaret Kadzo, along with field worker Prudence Kalama.

At the Broad Institute, the team is preparing for our second wave of sequencing of just over 2000 samples from South Africa and Kenya. We anticipate sequencing to occur in Winter/Spring 2024.