

# AMBITION News

The Ambition-cm Trial Newsletter  
(Issue 15: January 2019)



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Nabila and David (LSHTM, Gaborone)

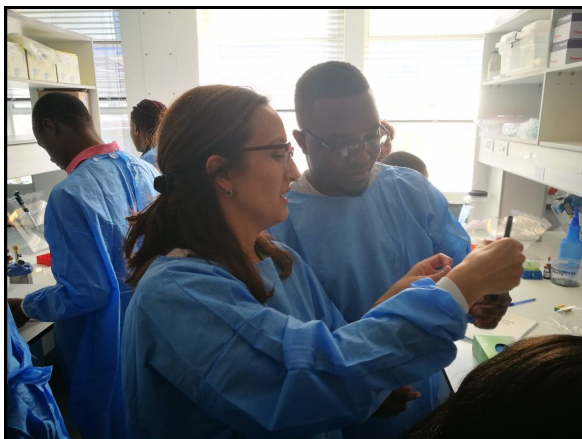
Philippa (LSHTM, London)

Timothée (Institut Pasteur, Paris)



@ambitioncm2020

Please do encourage  
colleagues to 'follow' us!



Dr. Dea Garcia-Hermoso from Institut Pasteur and Dr. Timothy Kachitosi from UNC Project Malawi practise isolation techniques during the Medical Mycology Course (10-14 December 2018).

## Greetings from Gaborone!



Happy New Year from Gaborone!

We hope that you had a restful break over the holiday period and that 2019 has started well for everyone. As we begin the New Year, we would like to thank our colleagues across all sites who have demonstrated such dedication and hard work to AMBITION over the past year. We have many hopes and plans for 2019, not least making significant progress with our patient recruitment target!

Since our last Newsletter in November, we are delighted to have **opened for recruitment** at both our **Lilongwe** and **Blantyre** sites in **Malawi**. Both teams are steadily enrolling patients and we are very glad to have them on board! More details on **Page 3**.

**Tshepiso Mbangiwa**, from Gaborone, has been undertaking her **PhD** with the AMBITION team for the past eleven months. On **Page 4** she talks about the six months that she spent at **Institut Pasteur** during 2018 and about her PhD work in general.

The **Medical Mycology Course**, which we delivered in conjunction with the AFGrica Unit with colleagues from the University of Cape Town and the University of Aberdeen, took place in **Cape Town** from **10-14 December**. More details on **Pages 5** and **6**.

2018 was a great year for AMBITION. Our teams achieved a tremendous amount and we take pleasure in new friendships and acquaintances forged. A few particular highlights can be enjoyed on **Pages 7** and **8**.

We look forward to continuing to work together in 2019 on our exciting project.

Best Wishes,

Joe

**Recruitment Update (as of 23 January 2019):**

**We are happy to share updates on patient recruitment numbers at each site:**

**Botswana-Harvard Partnership  
(Gaborone)**



**25**

The latest patient was recruited on **8 January 2019**

**University of Cape Town  
(Cape Town)**



**11**

The latest patient was recruited on **6 January 2019**

**University of Zimbabwe  
(Harare)**



**21**

The latest patient was recruited on **14 November 2018**

**UNC Project Malawi  
(Lilongwe)**



**11**

The latest patient was recruited in Lilongwe on **16 January 2019**

**Malawi-Liverpool Wellcome Trust  
Clinical Research Programme  
(Blantyre)**



**14**

The latest patient was recruited in Blantyre on **22 January 2019**

**IDI Uganda – Kampala  
IDI Uganda – Mbarara**



**29**

The latest patient was recruited in Kampala on **23 January 2019**



## Milestone 100th Patient!

We are excited to announce that we have officially recruited our 100th **AMBITION** patient! Congratulations to the team at **IDI Uganda (Kampala)** for doing the honours and enrolling our 100th patient on **14 January 2019**.



## First patients recruited in Malawi



We are delighted that both sites in Malawi opened to recruitment in November. The first patient was successfully randomised in **Lilongwe** within a few days on **23 November**. All thanks go to the UNC Project team for their hard work in ensuring that everything was set up and ready to go in time.

The first patient was recruited in **Blantyre** on **24 November**. Once again, thanks go to our colleagues at MLW for all their hard work. Well done in particular to those who spent time chasing up the Malawian regulatory authorities to secure the final approvals and help obtain the import permits for the study drugs.



We are very pleased to now be recruiting patients in all five countries, and look forward to starting to enrol patients at the Mbarara site in Uganda later this month.

We are excited for recruitment numbers to continue climbing as we start the New Year!

**The Malawi Site Initiation Visit at MLW in  
Blantyre, 28-29 August 2018**



### Tshepiso Mbangiwa: New Year Update!

Tshepiso Mbangiwa was awarded the AMBITION PhD Studentship in late 2017. Tshepiso's time has so far been divided approximately 50/50 between the lab at BHP and the Department of Mycology at Institut Pasteur, Paris, where she has been conducting lab work for the past six months under the mentorship of Prof. Olivier Lortholary, Prof. Françoise Dromer and Dr. Alexandre Alanio. Here she talks about her Institut Pasteur experience thus far and provides further details of her PhD work.

*In the 6 months that I have been working in the Institut Pasteur lab, I have learned a lot about the epidemiology and pathogenesis of cryptococcosis. I have also had the opportunity to observe some of the laboratory procedures that are used to test for cryptococcosis. These have included growing colonies on I-Canavanine glycine bromothymol blue (CGB) agar to differentiate between *C.gattii* and *C.neoformans* strains, and using a matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization (MALDI-TOF) procedure to characterize cryptococcus and other microbes, by measuring the mass to ion ratio of an ion. I have also had the pleasure of observing India ink testing and a lumbar puncture procedure at Necker Hospital under the supervision of Prof. Olivier Lortholary.*

*The main focus for my first six months at Institut Pasteur has been to develop a qPCR method to detect cryptococcosis. I have been working closely with Dr. Alexandre Alanio and Aude Sturny-Leclerc to develop a set of primers that can detect *Cryptococcus gattii* and *neoformans*, but we are still working on validating this assay on human samples. This is currently ongoing and we hope to have the results very soon.*

*I presented the preliminary results of this work at the Institut Pasteur mycology departmental retreat which was held at Château de Maffliers from 8-9 October 2018. The title of the presentation was 'A new diagnostic method for cryptococcosis'.*

*I also look forward to working with my supervisor Dr. Claire Hoving at the University of Cape Town in early 2019.*



Tshepiso working hard in the lab at Institut Pasteur!



Tshepiso presenting 'A new diagnostic method for cryptococcosis' at the Institut Pasteur departmental retreat between 8-9 October 2018





### Medical Mycology Course—Cape Town (10-14 December 2018)



The ‘**Lecture and Practical Course in Medical Mycology**’ took place in Cape Town from 10-14 December 2018. We joined forces with the AFGrica Unit (a collaboration between the University of Cape Town and the University of Aberdeen) to welcome **12 delegates** from the **AMBITION consortium**, **4 delegates** from the **EDCTP-funded DREAMM study**, **16 delegates** from elsewhere in Africa (funded by the **AFGrica Unit**) and 18 teaching staff.

We had a packed schedule! Our delegates took part in a rich programme of **lectures, workshops and practical laboratory sessions** focusing on the **key fungal pathogens in Africa** in addition to the **microbiological, immunological and clinical aspects of fungal diseases**. The course was also a wonderful opportunity for the delegates and teaching team to share knowledge and experience and to build new connections across the continent. A celebratory meal at Gold Restaurant on the final night also showcased some of our colleagues’ fine dance skills!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank **the team at UCT** for hosting us, especially **Dr. Claire Hoving** for all her hard work behind the scenes both before and during the course. We are also most grateful to **Prof. Gordon Brown** from the University of Aberdeen who obtained funding for the 16 additional delegates but who was unable to attend in person.

We now look ahead to our next big event in 2019, which will be the **AMBITION Investigators’ Meeting** at Institut Pasteur from 28-29 May!

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## AMBITION-cm

AMBIsome Therapy Induction Optimization







### And finally: some highlights of 2018!



First African Meningitis Trials Network (AMTNET) meeting in Lilongwe,  
30–31 January



Dr. Kenneth Ssebambulidde on his first day of his MSc  
in Immunology of Infectious Diseases at LSHTM



Site Initiation Visit in Kampala, 5-9 August



Site Initiation Visit in Cape Town, 26 June-6 July



And finally: some highlights of 2018!



Investigators' Meeting, 23-24 May



GCP and Clinical Trials Courses in Gaborone, 12-16  
March



Site Initiation Visit in Blantyre, 28-29 August