



Improving Hypertension Control in Rural Africa

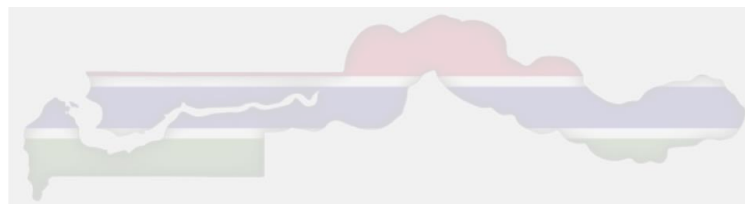
## News | February 2025

The IHCOR-Africa newsletter is produced thrice a year with the aim of informing members, partners and collaborators about activities, events, and progress on the project. It is also used to disseminate new developments and findings in the field of hypertension in rural Africa.

### IHCOR-Africa Work in The Gambia



Work on the IHCOR-Africa project aimed at improving hypertension control in rural Africa started in The Gambia in September 2022. The project team began by holding community engagement meetings with community members (community leaders, people living with hypertension, family carers, and village health workers), national and regional level decision-makers, NCD partners, health facility managers, health care providers, and community health nurses.



## Data collection

After successfully holding community engagement meetings the team embarked on fieldwork and data collection. Members of the work package 1 team within the project collected data in the Lower River Region from hypertensive patients, healthcare providers, decision-makers, and NCD partners to understand experiences, needs, and practices at the individual, organizational and system levels to detect, treat and control hypertension ([Diallo et al., 2024](#)). As this took place, members of work package 2 collected blood pressure measurements from study participants in Kiang West identified through the Kiang West Demographic Surveillance System. This exercise was followed by collecting data on target organ damage in the clinic at the MRC Unit Gambia field station in Keneba.

The field and clinic assessments, which begun in February 2024, followed. Consent was sought from a total of 722 participants, of whom 680 consented to participate in the study, and 623 completed study procedures. The clinic assessments included home and clinic BP measurements, cardiac and biochemical assessments.



## Next steps

Database cleaning has been completed, and data analysis will be starting soon.

## Cross-learning

Over the course of the project, the team in The Gambia has hosted and held several collaborative meetings with various group including teams working on the same project from Kenya and the UK.



Members of the IHCoR-Africa team paid a courtesy call to the NCD Programme at the Ministry of Health in The Gambia. Mr. Omar Badjie, the NCD Programme Manager, expressed his appreciation and shared insights into the challenges and plans at the Ministry. Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to continued collaboration. Photo from L to R: Brahim Diallo, Adrianna Murphy, Alexander Perkins, Omar Badjie, Pablo Perel, Sampa Sanneh, Lamarana Jallow, Seyfo Singhatheh, Modou Jobe



## Training

The IHCOR team in The Gambia organized a training workshop on research leadership and grant writing for early career researchers working on hypertension and related chronic diseases in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2023. Participants included post-doctoral fellows, mid-level clinical researchers and PhD students from 12 different countries. A second one is planned in June 2025.



### IHCOR team in The Gambia



From Left to Right: Modou Jobe, Brahim Diallo, Assan Jaye, Saidina Ceesay, Sampa Sanneh, and Andrew Prentice





IHCOR-Africa's online courses continue to provide invaluable training in hypertension research and research methodologies for researchers across sub-Saharan Africa. In 2024, all the four free training courses were successfully delivered. They included: 1) Introduction to hypertension research 2) Fundamentals of epidemiology and biostatistics for hypertension research 3) Health Systems: An introduction to key concepts, and 4) Fundamentals of clinical trials.

The free online training courses for 2025 will be starting in March. This will be the final year that these courses are being offered.

The first course on "Introduction to hypertension research" will run over four weeks from 25 March to 15 April 2025, with 3 contact hours on Tuesdays every week, and an additional 8 hours of self-directed learning per week. It will cover the following topics:

- Week 1: Setting the scene of hypertension in sub-Saharan Africa
- Week 2: An introduction to the epidemiology of hypertension
- Week 3: An introduction to health systems factors in hypertension management
- Week 4: An introduction to clinical trials for hypertension research

## Selected Publications and News from IHCOR-Africa Group Members

1. [Improving Implementation of NCD Care in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: The Case of Fixed Dose Combinations for Hypertension in Kenya](#). This study explored health systems factors affecting implementation of innovations for non-communicable diseases using the case study of FDCs in Kenya. (Murphy et al., 2025).
2. [Acceptability of fixed-dose combination treatments for hypertension in Kenya: a qualitative study using the Theoretical Framework of Acceptability](#). This study analysed acceptability of FDC treatments for hypertension in Kenya using qualitative interviews with patients, caregivers, and healthcare workers. (Mbuthia et al., 2024; in press at PLoS Global Public Health).
3. Robinson Oyando, a PhD student on the IHCOR project, made a poster presentation during the 8th Global Symposium on Health Systems Research that took place from 18-22 November in Nagasaki, Japan. His presentation was on the assessment of sub-national health systems capacity to deliver primary care services for hypertension in rural coastal Kenya. 
4. Prof. Anthony Etyang participated in the KEMRI Annual Scientific and Health (KASH) webinar series where he presented on "The Role of Community Health Promoters in Diagnosing Hypertension". The presentation was on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025. 
5. Elminah Saru, a post graduate diploma student attached to IHCOR, made a presentation during the 15<sup>th</sup> KEMRI Annual Scientific and Health Conference held from the 11-14 February 2025. The presentation was on investigating the influence of the operators' gender on blood pressure measurements.

# IMPLEMENT-CVD

IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIONS IN CVD CARE

The IMPLEMENT-CVD project aims to identify factors at all levels of the health system and the interactions between them that affect implementation of fixed-dose combination (FDC) treatment for hypertension in Kenya and The Gambia, and to design and evaluate strategies to improve implementation of FDCs.

IMPLEMENT-CVD and IHCOR have joined forces to develop a feasibility study for a community-based hypertension intervention comprised of blood pressure screening, risk stratification, and treatment with FDCs. The I-CVD team is focusing on how best to train the healthcare and community workers who are going to be involved in the community-based intervention. A scoping review that evaluated healthcare worker training programmes for new drug treatments across low- and middle-income countries was conducted to inform the design of the training. The training will be evaluated through various dimensions (e.g., healthcare worker knowledge, confidence, and feedback on training design). The I-CVD team is also focusing on the feasibility and sustainability of FDCs within the community-based intervention use (for both healthcare/community workers and patients).

The I-CVD team has been working closely with medicine procurement and financing stakeholders in Kenya and The Gambia to explore ways to procure FDCs for the feasibility study which are more likely to be sustainable in the long-term (i.e., beyond study completion).

IMPLEMENT-CVD team: Dr Adrianna Murphy (LSHTM), Dr Ruth Willis (LSHTM), Dr Jasmine Hine (LSHTM), Vallery Obure (KEMRI Wellcome Trust)

## Your Feedback

Kindly share with us feedback on this issue of the newsletter and suggestions on what you would like us to include in the next issue.

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## Collaborating institutions



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