Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The year is passing by fast and we’re already in full summer swing in the US with several presentations completed at national conferences. I’m looking forward to AIDS 2018 in Amsterdam in July, not only to present some of our findings from South Africa but also to the book signing and reception for *HIV Pioneers: Lives Lost, Careers Changed, and Survival*.

In this issue of our newsletter, you’ll see that we’re very busy with project work. And I’m so proud of all the papers published, as we were well represented at the RTI Authors’ Award dinner. Big congratulations to Jackie Ndirangu on receiving her first author award!

We also have enjoyed our newest intern, Samantha Farley, who has been very eager to help across a variety of tasks. She’ll also be developing a marketing plan for our PrEPaRE study and will present it at the RTI Internship Showcase.

We’re in the process of finalizing plans for our second *Ending Gender Inequalities: Evidence to Impact* conference, which will be held in Johannesburg on October 8-9 of this year. Registration is now open. And those who had their abstracts accepted can now get busy preparing their posters. Additionally, we were able to offer over 40 travel awards to presenters in almost 20 countries.

After that, our next big conference will be InWomen’s in San Antonio in June 2019. Abstracts will be due in January 2019. If you’re not already on our InWomen’s listserv, please let me know.

Finally, please take a look at our new RTI Global Gender Center website at [gendercenter.rti.org](http://gendercenter.rti.org).

In peace,

Mpho/Dr. Wendee
NEW AWARDS

Understanding Co-occurring Conditions and Integrated Healthcare among Young Women in South Africa
(Diversity Investigator: Courtney Bonner)
This supplement will examine how alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, mental health, and sexual risk impact HIV risk among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) and will engage providers to explore their perception of healthcare access for these multiple issues. Also, we’ll engage AGYW to understand their motivations and experiences of participating in HIV prevention research to inform our future studies, which will seek to develop sustainable methods to provide integrated AOD use, mental health, and HIV prevention services for this population.

This study is funded by National Institute on Drug Abuse grants R01 DA041227-03S1 and R25 DA031608

ONGOING PROJECTS

PrEPaRE Pretoria: PREvention Empowering and PROtecting Young Women in South Africa
(PI: Wendee Wechsberg)
This study seeks to examine a multilevel strategy to increase the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) with underserved adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) 16 to 24 years of age who engage in high-risk sex in Pretoria. In April 2018, we completed 6 focus group discussions with a total of 43 AGYW and 4 focus group discussions with a total of 44 healthcare providers and other clinic staff. A majority of AGYW reported they had never heard of PrEP, but they showed strong interest. However, they were apprehensive about attending clinics to access or learn about PrEP because of anticipated negative treatment from staff. Most clinicians also had not heard of PrEP, nor were they ready to prescribe it. However, they welcomed the idea of PrEP as an HIV prevention tool.

This study is funded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development grant R01HD094629.

Mitigating the Outcomes Associated with the Injection Drug Use Epidemic in Southern Appalachia
(PI: William Zule)
This two-stage collaboration among RTI, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, local health departments, and the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition works in the 8 westernmost rural counties in North Carolina that have been hard hit by the opioid epidemic. In Stage 1, we’re assessing service needs and service availability. In Stage 2, we’ll work to increase service availability and link people in need to appropriate services.

This study is funded by National Institute on Drug Abuse grant UG3 DA044823.

Cross-Site Evaluation of Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention for States (PfS) Program
(PD: William Zule)
The PfS evaluation team—which includes members from RTI and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—recently completed semistructured telephone interviews with awardees in all 29 PfS states. These interviews assessed progress enhancing states’ prescription drug monitoring programs and progress implementing community or insurer/health system interventions to prevent prescription drug abuse and overdose.

Funding provided by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention contract number HHSD2002013M53964B.

Young Women-Focused HIV Prevention: Seek & Test in North Carolina Clinics (NC Young Women’s CoOp)
(PI: Wendee Wechsberg; PD/Co-I: Felicia Browne)
Full implementation of this study continues to reach young African American women (aged 18 to 25) who use alcohol and other drugs—with outreach, marketing, and recruitment activities ongoing. We’ve enrolled about 400 young women in this study. Since our last newsletter, we’ve begun our 12-month follow-up appointments, and project staff have been working hard to retain young women for this appointment and the 6-month follow-up appointment. This study is a collaboration with the Durham County Department of Public Health, Wake County Human Services, and the Guilford County Department of Public Health. We’re grateful to be working in the health clinics in these locations.

This study is funded by National Institute on Drug Abuse grant R01 DA041009.

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Cape Town Young Women’s Health CoOp
(PI: Wendee Wechsberg; Co-PD: Felicia Browne, RTI International; Co-PD: Tara Carney, South African Medical Research Council)

Since beginning study enrollment in November 2016, the Cape Town Young Women’s Health CoOp (YWHC) has enrolled over 400 of our planned sample of approximately 500 young women for this project. We’re currently conducting both our 6- and 12-month follow-ups, with our interventionists delivering Workshops 1 and 2, with very high participation rates. While our collaboration with the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) beneficiaries came to an end earlier this year, this working relationship led to the screening of a number of potentially eligible young women. Two peer role models were also trained on conducting the evidence-based YWHC. Additionally, we recently published the study protocol.

This study is funded by National Institute on Drug Abuse grant R01 DA041227.

Implementation Research for Vulnerable Women in South Africa
(PI: Wendee Wechsberg; PD: Jacqueline Ndirangu)

In collaboration with Kheth’Impilo, our South African partner, this project is implementing the Women’s Health CoOp intervention in HIV Testing and Counseling and substance abuse treatment clinics in Cape Town. Over the course of four cycles, this study has reached 480 women living with HIV who use alcohol and other drugs. We’re currently conducting 6-month follow-ups for the final cycle, which is projected to end in September 2018. We conducted mid-implementation focus group discussions to elicit feedback from interventionists on implementation, and conducted post-implementation focus group discussions with participants from Cycle 3 to assess their experiences with the intervention. We published the study protocol this year and other manuscripts are under development.

This study is funded by National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism grant R01 AA022882.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

RTI GLOBAL GENDER CENTER

Ending Gender Inequalities: Evidence to Impact Conference
October 8-9, 2018
Johannesburg, South Africa

Time is running out to register for the Ending Gender Inequalities conference! World-renowned gender equality leaders will share innovative and timely evidence-based research and practice to eliminate gender disparities. This one-of-a-kind meeting offers an inclusive environment to form new collaborations with individuals working to achieve gender equality globally. For more information or to register, visit www.cvent.com/d/kgqm7v.

SUGAR SPOTLIGHT

Authors’ Awards Dinner

We’re so proud of our team for receiving RTI’s Highly Published Author awards! A special shout-out to Jackie Ndirangu who recently received her first author award at this year’s dinner.

Keynote Speaker at Bennett College

Dr. Felicia Browne was the Keynote Speaker at the 11th Annual Interdisciplinary Research Day on April 6, 2018, at Bennett College. She shared her research experiences studying HIV in South Africa, and offered practical advice for students on making a successful transition from college to career.
JOINING OUR COMMUNITY
COLLABORATIVE BOARDS (CCB)

We're interested in hearing your voice. We also want to know about your ideas for collaborating in the community.

If you're interested in joining our North Carolina CCB or coming to a CCB meeting as a visitor, please contact Dr. Felicia Browne at fbrowne@rti.org.

If you're interested in joining our Cape Town (South Africa) CCB, please contact Dr. Bronwyn Myers at Bronwyn.myers@mrc.ac.za.

If you're interested in joining our Pretoria (South Africa) CCB, please contact Ms. Jacqueline Ndirangu at jndirangu@rti.org.