



Health systems research: developing partnerships to understand and improve health

Monday 14th November 2016,
The Winkler, Nelspruit

Organised by:
MRC/Wits-Agincourt Research Unit, University of the Witwatersrand
Centre for Global Development, University of Aberdeen, UK

SUMMARY

The Verbal Autopsy and Participatory Action Research (VAPAR) project has developed a method to connect health authorities, communities and researchers to jointly undertake research of mutual benefit. This work has been progressed with support from the DFID/MRC/ESRC/Wellcome Trust Health Systems Research Initiative by the MRC/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit (Agincourt) of Wits University, the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Health, and the Universities of Aberdeen in Scotland and Umeå in Sweden. In VAPAR, researchers, communities and health systems stakeholders worked to generate evidence on disease profiles, levels and causes of death, health systems and social determinants, and priorities for action. With a focus on health systems stakeholders, the outputs are being disseminated to investigate relevance, and to reflect on the method as a means of sustainable and self-administered evaluation and planning.

AIMS: The workshop will present the VAPAR methods and findings as a programme of partnerships research with the MRC/Wits-Agincourt Research Unit at Wits University. The workshop aims to appraise the methods, findings and priorities for action, and to strengthen partnerships for practical and problem-oriented research. The workshop will present three elements of the method for discussion with health systems colleagues.

- (1) New ways to routinely record deaths investigated in Verbal Autopsy (VA) in relation to the circumstances of mortality;
- (2) Participatory action research (PAR) as a method to generate evidence on the contributions of social and health systems factors to mortality
- (3) Working with health systems practitioners to interpret VA and PAR data to produce actionable public health agendas.

The workshop brings together individuals from academic and health systems backgrounds to explore methods and opportunities to generate 'people-centred', 'action-oriented' information on health inequalities. By people-centred information, we mean information developed by and for people who are directly affected by the issues being investigated. By action-oriented, we mean research that is embedded in contexts where the knowledge outputs can be acted upon for positive change.

PROGRAMME

Chairs K Kahn and R Twine: MRC/Wits-Agincourt Research Unit, Wits University

0830 **Registration**

0930 Welcome and opening remarks | Professor K Kahn

0945 Keynote Address Contributions of the MRC/Wits-Agincourt Unit and the INDEPTH Network | Professor K Kahn

1015 Presentation 1 Stakeholder Engagement | Mrs R Twine + MCWYHN Directorate

1045 **Coffee**

1115 Presentation 2 VAPAR Method | Dr L D'Ambruoso

1200 Close of morning session | Professor K Kahn

1230 **Lunch**

1330 Roundtable 1: Embedding research in health systems | Dr L D'Ambruoso

1500 **Coffee**

1530 Roundtable 2: Planning and collaborations | Mrs R Twine

1700 Close of afternoon session | Mrs R Twine + Dr L D'Ambruoso

SPEAKERS



Professor Kathleen Kahn | Senior Scientist: MRC/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research (Agincourt), Professor: Health and Population Division, School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand. Kathy co-founded the MRC/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit (Agincourt) and uses her experience in public health research to enhance child and adolescent health and development, understand of burden of disease, provide post graduate training, build sustainable health research partnerships across the world, and contribute to public health prioritisation for planning and delivering appropriate interventions. Email: Kathleen.Kahn@wits.ac.za



Ms Rhian Twine | Head of Stakeholder Engagement Office MRC/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research (Agincourt) School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand. Rhian has been working in public health in rural areas of South Africa for 27 years and focusses on public engagement in longitudinal health research. Email: Rhian.Twine@wits.ac.za



Dr Lucia D'Ambruoso | Deputy Director, Centre for Global Development, and Lecturer in Global Health University of Aberdeen Lucia is a social scientist working in Global Health for over 15 years. She is interested in health inequalities and the role of research to foster empowerment, inclusion and partnerships. Email: lucia.dambruoso@abdn.ac.uk.

Keynote Address | Contributions of the MRC/Wits-Agincourt Unit and the INDEPTH Network

This presentation will focus on the history and development of the MRC/Wits Agincourt Research Unit and its contributions to International Health Research through the INDEPTH Network. Important results and health planning implications from the research conducted in the Unit will be presented. The position of the VAPAR project within the structure of the Unit will be described.

Presentation 1 | Stakeholder Engagement Office: how we work together to produce and use data This presentation will describe the public participation methods and plans in the MRC/Wits-Agincourt Unit, and will include input from the MCWYHN Directorate with whom the Stakeholder Engagement Office, together with VAPAR and PRICELESS have been engaging for the past 3 years.

Presentation 2 | Verbal Autopsy and Participatory Action Research (VAPAR) project This presentation will report on the development of a people-centred health systems research method called VAPAR. VAPAR is a method to combine VA data describing mortality in large groups of people in terms of medical causes and social and systems circumstances. These data are then combined with local knowledge gained from Participatory Action Research (PAR), a process in which communities organise evidence for action. The method is embedded in the health system at different levels throughout to ensure practical relevance.

SPONSORS

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Funders



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