



Academy for
Health Innovation
Uganda

ACADEMY NEWS

THE HEALTH INNOVATIONS HUB IN THE TIME OF
COVID-19: COPING WITH THE NEW NORMAL



ACADEMY ON THE FRONT-LINE: Call for Life – COVID



As part of the national response in the fight against Corona virus in Uganda, Academy for Health innovation is working tirelessly through a partnership between Infectious Diseases Institute-Makerere University and the Ministry of health.

Through this agreement, a team of software engineers and medical professionals have developed a pilot project that will facilitate the management of the large numbers of Covid-19 patients. This pilot project is an adaptation of the Call for Life (C4Life) project that has successfully facilitated the management of Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS patients.

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It uses basic mobile phones (Katorch) through voice automated call system known as IVR for Interactive Voice Response; a computer assisted patient management system. It is accessible, easy to use and has the potential to be widely applicable.

It is an intelligent technological health innovation that will support front line workers to track all COVID-19 patients; these include recovered patients, those that have left quarantine and the contacts of the patients.

The Ministry of Health is already tracking at least 240 people who have completed their mandatory quarantine using this system. These individuals have begun receiving these voice automated calls to monitor their conditions and provide a platform to self-evaluate and report any symptoms. It is currently in English, Luganda and Swahili but other languages are in the works.

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The Academy has been mentioned in the Daily Monitor for our contribution to the national response against COVID-19

<https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-ministry-track-Covid-19-cases-IVR-Makerere-Kambugu/688334-5542456-ydej9i/index.html>

The UK Financial Times also applauded the Academy's efforts in managing HIV patients using a digital platform that is both efficient and affordable

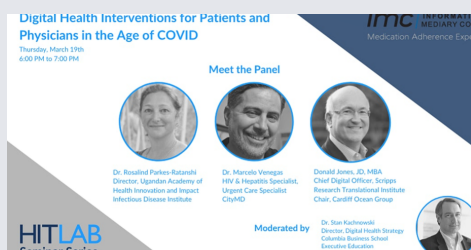
<https://www.ft.com/content/7e9a92de-684e-11ea-a6ac-9122541af204>



THE SILVER LINING: EVOLVING AND INNOVATING

Despite the entire country being on lock down and most of the Academy activities coming to a stop or slowing down, the team has not been deterred from serving our beneficiaries. The team has had to innovate and evolve, as an innovation driven group within an infectious diseases organisation, we are well placed to think about novel ways to support the COVID response.

Dr Rosalind participated in an online seminar on Digital Health Interventions for Patients



and Physicians in the Age of COVID which was organised by HITLABS at Columbia Business School on the 19th March 2020.

Dr Martin Balaba has also had the opportunity to represent the Academy on two Online Seminars. One on the current state of EHealth in East Africa, challenges and how to fast track Health adoption given the impact that COVID has exposed. This was organised by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) on the 18th May 2020.



Another online Seminar organized by LeO Africa and the discussion was on the preparedness

of our systems to effectively manage COVID and the role that leadership plays in the success of managing the pandemic. On the 4th April 2020



Dr Elizabeth Oseku, who is the Call for Life Team leader, participated in a zoom discussion during the IDI Research forum meeting where she shared about how Academy is supporting the COVID National response through Call for life: Digitizing the COVID response with Call for Life Uganda. 14th May 2020.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE MHEALTH COVID FUNDING AWARD

We are happy to announce that the Academy, in collaboration with the University of Cambridge, IDI and Makerere University, successfully applied for a grant under the UK Research Initiative - Global Challenges Research Fund (UKRI-GCRF). This grant will go towards the project titled “**Experience of M-health technology for sensitization and contact follow up for high-risk communities for infectious**

disease outbreaks; Call for Life-COVID (CFL-C) and Call for Life Ebola (CFL-E)” project.

This project aims to undertake a multidisciplinary research study to adapt and pilot mHealth tools for Ebola virus disease (EVD) and COVID to support community information dissemination, community surveillance and encourage health seeking behavior. This work will undertake a mixed methods approach to understanding barriers and enablers to health seeking behavior and perceptions/ fears/concerns of

Ebola virus, COVID and other epidemic outbreaks mitigation measures within at risk and hard to reach communities.

It will also document the experiences of those using an IVR service for support during an outbreak.



**COPING WITH THE NEW NORMAL:
STAFF PERSPECTIVE**

This period has been shrouded in uncertainty as numbers of COVID-19 positive cases continue to rise. The Academy team has had to adapt to the changes as well in order to remain in service.

It has been a time for some project teams to bond and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. Others have noted an increase in productivity and personal growth as a result of working from home.

As we try to adhere to the presidential as well as the Organization directives, some of the staff members who have been utilizing the office facilities endeavored to wear their masks and maintain a safe social distance as they work.



Quote: "Working from home has been fantastic for me since I have all the time to utilise the nights till after midnight. I am naturally an evening worker." Eunice Kyomugisha-Team Lead, Social Science team.



Drones Project staff in Kalangala exercising to keep the body and mind fit during COVID-19 lockdown

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

The Academy has managed to support staff members in different ways; according to their needs to ensure that everyone continues with their duties with as little disruption as possible. For example, laptops and MiFis were procured for those staff members who did not have in order for them to be able to do their work safely from home. Our team leaders are trialing a new home working software called Basecamp (<https://basecamp.com/>), that has been donated to the Academy for free as we are supporting the COVID response. We are also grateful to IDI F&A team for making available transport for the staff members who must come into the office for one reason or another.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR THE POST COVID WORLD:

Some Academy staff have taken this time during lockdown to enroll for Short online courses for their personal and career development. For example, the Social Science team recently completed a course in writing for social research. Another team completed Project Management in Global health under The University of Washington.

Dr Rosalind and Dr Ruth undertook a virtual course run by Columbia Business School on Developing a Digital Health Strategy, with an emphasis on the post COVID world.

It has also been a time to reflect and plan for the future; how can one contribute to the purpose of a team, an organisation and the country especially during unprecedented occurrences like COVID-19.