

Global OB/GYN News From Academics to Advocacy and Action

Welcome to the May newsletter! Our goal is to share with you stories from our work around the world, important new publications from academia and the media on global women's health, a few fun facts, and tips on how to stay safe while traveling. We'd love your input, so if you have a story, see or story or wish to share a tip, send them our way! Email us at globalobgynnews@partners.org; From the Editors: Adeline Boatin, AK Goodman, Tom Randall

Notes from the field

The Challenge of Obstetrical Care in Rural Uganda by Tom Randall

This March I traveled to Bugoye, Uganda. This town is well known to some of our MGH Internal Medicine colleagues but is new ground for the MGH Department of Ob/Gyn and is far from the main track of global health in Uganda. The town is in the far western district of Kasese, hard up against the towering Rwenzori mountains, which here form the border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The journey to get there passes through the beautiful but recently infamous Queen Elizabeth Park. That day, I was only concerned about baboons snatching my phone on the drive through.



I had come to help with a new initiative in women's health being undertaken by a collaborative team from the local district health officer for women's health, the director of the Bugoye Health Center, a team from the Mbarara University of Science and Technology's Community Health Department, and from our Department of Internal Medicine and Center for Global health at MGH. They are engaging with local leaders and with the communities in local villages to teach about what new services they plan to introduce for the community and to get feedback. So, when I arrived at the Health Center in Bugoye, we had a few minutes to settle in a have tea before heading out for a community awareness event at a local village. People living in sub Saharan Africa learn to drive ordinary cars up crazily rutted and steep dirt and stone tracks.



and hike another thirty minutes or so up to the village, and there, we found what seemed to be every adult in the village waiting for us. Their attention was rapt, and the discussion, in their local language, was intense. They wanted these new services very much, they needed help getting women in labor down the hill to Bugoye (I thought I was going to need help!) and a lot of time was spent on the lack of respect the women from the village felt they received from the midwives at the health center. Here on the other side of the world, high in the foothills of the Rwenzori Mountains, women's health matters, trust matters, and respect for women in their times of need deeply matters.

Fun Fact: With traffic accidents as the leading cause of injury and death in resource constrained settings, it is important to bring your own first aid kit. Tourniquets can be a life saver. Here is a link to help you learn and stock your kit! <https://www.verywellhealth.com/tourniquet-for-first-aid-kit-4107507>

Best brand: RATS: rapid application tourniquet system

Paperchase

"I have no choice": Influences on Contraceptive Use & Abortion among Women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<https://journals.co.za/content/journal/10520/EJC-1544e1473c>

In 2015, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) recorded an estimated maternal mortality ratio of 693/100,000 live births. Strict abortion laws, high fertility rates, low contraceptive prevalence, and lack of emergency obstetric care all contribute to the high maternal mortality ratio. Congolese women's contraceptive decision-making was shaped by a range of external influences rather than their own independent decisions. Non-autonomous decisions and strict abortion laws influenced the methods used to abort a pregnancy, exposing risks of infection, complication, and fatality. These findings highlight that Congolese women's decisions about their fertility and family planning are constrained by policy and socio-cultural influences.

An Epidemic of Suspicion – Ebola and Violence in the DRC Perspective from a medical team leader for Médecin sans Frontières working in DRC.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1902682>



*Exam room in the Bugoye Health Center clinic
Bugoye, Uganda
(reproduced with permission)*

Safety and security tip of the month As individuals, we are all vulnerable travelers in one way or another. A good traveler understands their strengths and weaknesses, and more importantly, understands how travel to foreign locales can be potentially isolating or expose us to circumstances from which personal risk can arise. This recent article in the New York Times highlights a number of concerning issues, especially those faced by female solo travelers.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/25/travel/solo-female-travel.html>

News Bulletin

Girls' Education Determined by Sanitation and Hygiene

Access to safe water and sanitation significantly determines girls' success in schools. Girls who attend schools without water and sanitation facilities can miss up to 40 days of class in a year due to menstruation.

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/girls-education-toilet-clean-water/>

Mobile Phone Game to Change Health Behaviors?

Georgetown University launched a game in Nepal to inform youths about family planning, fertility and other reproductive health issues. This game just launched, so its effectiveness is yet to be evaluated.

<https://gumc.georgetown.edu/news-release/georgetown-researchers-launch-nari-paila-mobile-games-to-share-information-on-fertility-awareness-family-planning-in-nepal/>

Save the date!

May 29, 2019: Global Health Exposition at MGH

Location: Bulfinch tent

Time: 11 am- 2 pm

June 3-7, 2019

Monitoring and Evaluation for Humanitarian Programs Workshop
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

<https://hhi.harvard.edu/education/workshops/monitoring-and-evaluation>

Funding Opportunity: Apply for a travel grant of \$2000 towards a global health trip. The purpose of the trip must be focused on aspects of women's healthcare in resource-constrained environments. If interested, please contact Ak Goodman (agoodman@partners.org).
(For MGH Dept OB/GYN only).

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