

GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH REPORT — MARCH 2025



A report from the Centre for Global Mental Health.



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychiatry



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BACKGROUND

This past year the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry signed a memorandum of understanding with educational and training institutions in Ghana to allow medical learners to complete training in the other country. Psychiatry is rapidly expanding as a training choice for medical students in Ghana. Fifteen years ago there were as few as four psychiatrists in the whole country of 21 million people, while today there are over 80 for 35 million people, with more than 50 in training through the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, including 30 who were admitted to the program this year. While numbers are growing, there is currently no infrastructure to support any subspecialty training. The focus of Ghanaian fellowships at Dalhousie will be subspecialty training to support establishing similar structures at home.

In 2024 three fellows from Ghana have completed six-month fellowships at Dalhousie in Neuropsychiatry, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Geriatric Psychiatry. Three additional fellows are scheduled to arrive in May 2025 and September 2025: one to train in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, another in Forensic Psychiatry and the other in Early Psychosis with the expectation that he returns and set up the first early intervention program in Ghana. It is expected that towards the end 2025 residents from Dalhousie will begin a month-long rotation in global mental health at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra.

The Department of Psychiatry has also established significant collaborations with institutions in Nigeria to advance global mental health initiatives. The department works with the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital and Brooks Insights Ltd on the RESETTLE-IDPs project addressing psychological trauma in displaced populations. It partners with the African Institute for Health Policy and Health Systems at David Umahi Federal University on the BRIDGE-IDAs project focusing on mental health educational interventions for displaced adolescents. The department also collaborates with the Centre for Clinical Trials, Research and Implementation Science (CCTRIS), University of Lagos on several Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation sponsored projects investigating intersections between maternal physical and mental health outcomes.

These Nigerian collaborations extend beyond research to include strategic policy engagement with the Federal Ministry of Health, establishing pathways for embedding mental health expertise within national health frameworks. Together with the Ghana partnerships, these initiatives demonstrate the department's commitment to developing culturally responsive, evidence-based interventions that can be implemented in resource-limited settings, while building local capacity for mental health service delivery.



VISIT TO GHANA, MARCH 2025

The week of March 3, 2025, Drs. Vincent Agyapong and Jason Morrison travelled to Ghana to meet with local faculty, residents, and administrators to discuss the progress with the reciprocal training agreement so far. Dr. Morrison, who leads the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis Program (NSEPP), also wished to better understand the current practice of psychiatry in Ghana to allow the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis Program team to try to tailor the learning objectives and experiences of their Ghanaian fellow to the reality of practice in Ghana.



Drs. Vincent Agyapong and Jason Morrison visited Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH).

Visit to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital

The visit began on Monday in Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana and home of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the home institution of our next three Ghanaian fellows, and the medical alma mater of Dr. Agyapong. The day began with Dr. Morrison presenting a talk on early intervention in psychosis to the residents and faculty at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH).





Dr. Jason Morrison presented a talk on early intervention in psychosis to the residents and faculty at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH).



Next Dr. Morrison and Agyapong had a tour of the clinical facilities at the hospital by Psychiatry leaders and the fellows who will arrive in the fall. With abundant time to see the inpatient units, emergency department, outpatient clinic, and ask many questions, both came away with a clearer idea of the structure of outpatient care delivery including current resources for treating psychosis. The meeting at KATH concluded with a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer of the hospital, Professor Addai-Mensah who expressed strong support for the collaboration between Dalhousie University and the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons.

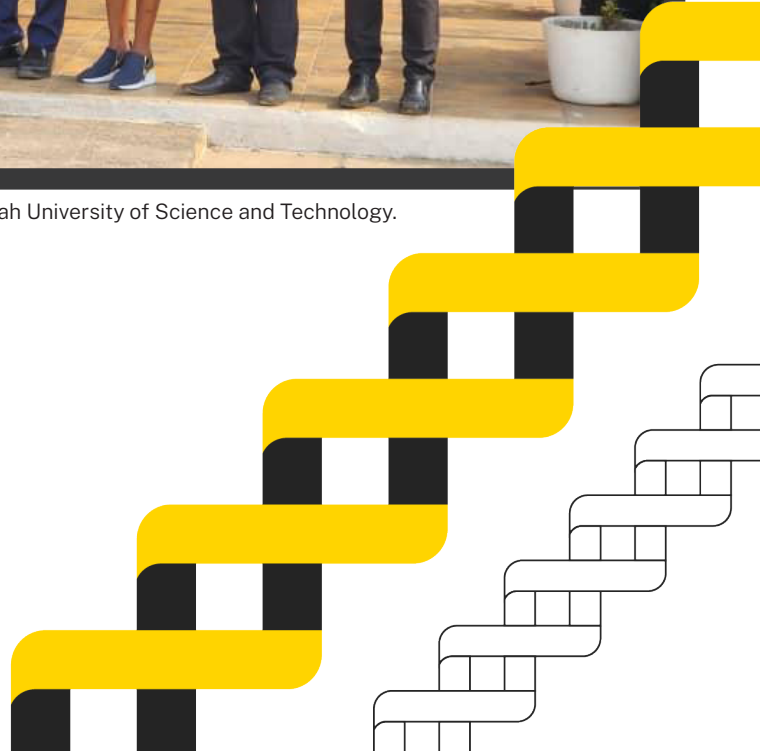


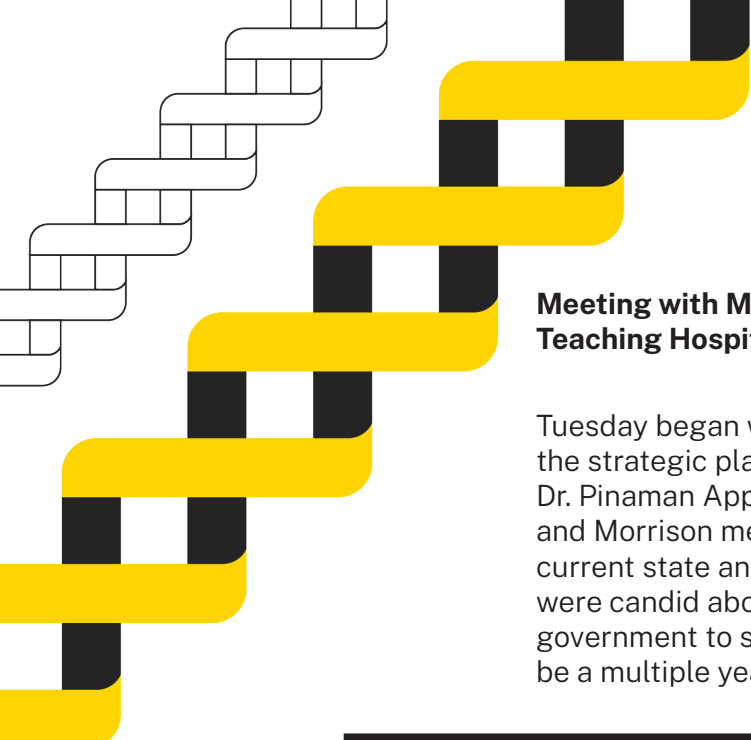
Drs. Vincent Agyapong and Jason Morrison concluded the visit to Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH) with a meeting with Professor Addai-Mensah, CEO of the hospital.

In the afternoon they met with the Dean of Medicine at KNUST who expressed his support for this program and marvelled at the growth of psychiatry in Ghana over the past decade. Dr. Morrison was able to discuss logistics and potential learning objectives for his fellowship with Dr. Caleb Otu-Ansah before he and Dr. Agyapong boarded a flight to Accra for the rest of the visit.



Drs. Vincent Agyapong and Jason Morrison met with the dean of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.





Meeting with Mental Health Authority of Ghana and Visit to Korle Bu Teaching Hospital

Tuesday began with a meeting with the Mental Health Authority of Ghana, the strategic planning body for psychiatry training in Ghana. It is led by Dr. Pinaman Appau, the first female psychiatrist in Ghana. Drs. Agyapong and Morrison met with her whole team to get an understanding of current state and future directions for psychiatry training in Ghana. They were candid about how, just as in Canada, gaining resources from the government to set up structures for new clinics and training programs will be a multiple year process.



Drs. Vincent Agyapong and Jason Morrison met with the Mental Health Authority of Ghana.

That afternoon Drs. Agyapong and Morrison visited the Melody Centre, the beautiful new psychiatry building at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital associated with the University of Ghana Medical School. Dr. Morrison gave his talk on early intervention in psychosis to residents and faculty there, followed by a tour of the facility.



Dr. Jason Morrison gave a presentation on early intervention in psychosis to residents and faculty at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital.

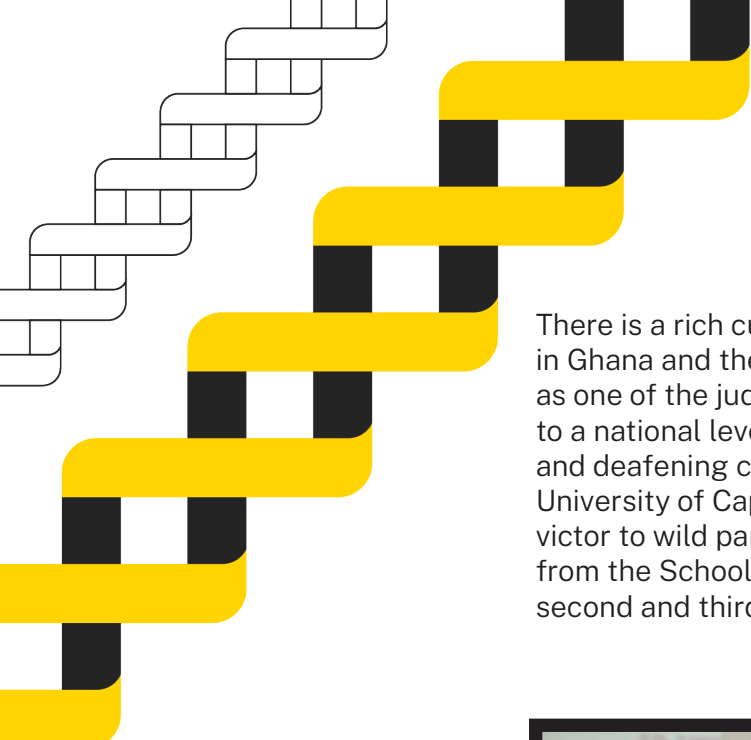
11th Inter-Medical School Public Speaking Competition

On Wednesday, they attended the annual medical student debate in psychiatry jointly sponsored by St. Patrick's Mental Health Services in Dublin, Ireland, the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry, the Global Psychological e-Health Foundation and the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, a body similar to the Royal College in Canada. This debate was proposed and initially organized by Dr. Agyapong in 2010 as a way to increase interest in psychiatry among medical students. The seven medical schools in Ghana send a team of two debaters to offer policy solutions to topical mental health themed issues. This year, the theme was 'How to curb the menace of gaming addiction in Ghana.' The winning debaters win an all-expense paid four-week elective experience at St. Patrick's University Hospital in Dublin, Ireland.



Audience members at the 11th Inter-Medical School Public Speaking Competition.





There is a rich culture of competition, academic performance and debate in Ghana and the debate was a raucous affair. Dr. Morrison, who acted as one of the judges for the competition, found the atmosphere similar to a national level university athletic competition with high turnout and deafening cheering and support for each school's debate duo. The University of Cape Coast School of Medical Sciences was announced the victor to wild pandemonium from their devoted student base. Contestants from the School of Medical Sciences at the KNUST and the UGMS placed second and third respectively and received consolation trophies.



Thursday, March 6 was a national holiday celebrating Ghanaian independence of March 6, 1957, the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to obtain independence from colonial powers.

Meeting with Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons

Friday involved a series of meetings with the Rector and other leaders in the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, the body that oversees all medical training in Ghana. He expressed broad support for the Dalhousie-Ghana partnership, saying it was the best current partnership of several existing training schemes with high-income countries. We discussed the problem of training in high-income countries often leading to the trainee not returning to Ghana, and the importance that such programs focus on increasing training capacity in Ghana. Rector Professor Richard Adanu had several excellent ideas about how to foster this. For example, he asked if part of all the fellows experience could include a history of the development of psychiatry in Canada so that fellows could have a roadmap for how to build a program and realistic expectations about the time this takes. We also discussed making use of virtual options for Ghanaian trainees to participate in Dalhousie based academic activities which would require no one to travel.

They then met for the final time with the key leaders in the Faculty of Psychiatry at the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, including Professor Akwasi Osei, Chair of the Faculty, Dr. Pinaman Appau, Chief Examiner of the Faculty, Professor Sammy Ohene, former Chair of the Faculty and former head of the Department of Psychiatry at the UGMS and Dr. Delali Fiagbe, training coordinator of the College and the head of Psychiatry at UGMS and Korle Bu Teaching Hospital. They discussed final thoughts about students from both institutions getting the maximum benefit from this partnership.

All in all, it was a busy and productive visit that further cemented relationships between our two institutions and countries.



Drs. Vincent Agyapong and Jason Morrison met with the Rector and other leaders in the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons.

PROJECTS IN NIGERIA

The Department of Psychiatry is collaborating with researchers in Nigeria on several groundbreaking projects.

1. **Global Mental Health in Humanitarian Crises: The Rebuilding Emotional Stability and Strength Through Therapeutic and Life-Skills Education for Internally Displaced Persons (RESETTLE-IDPs) Study**

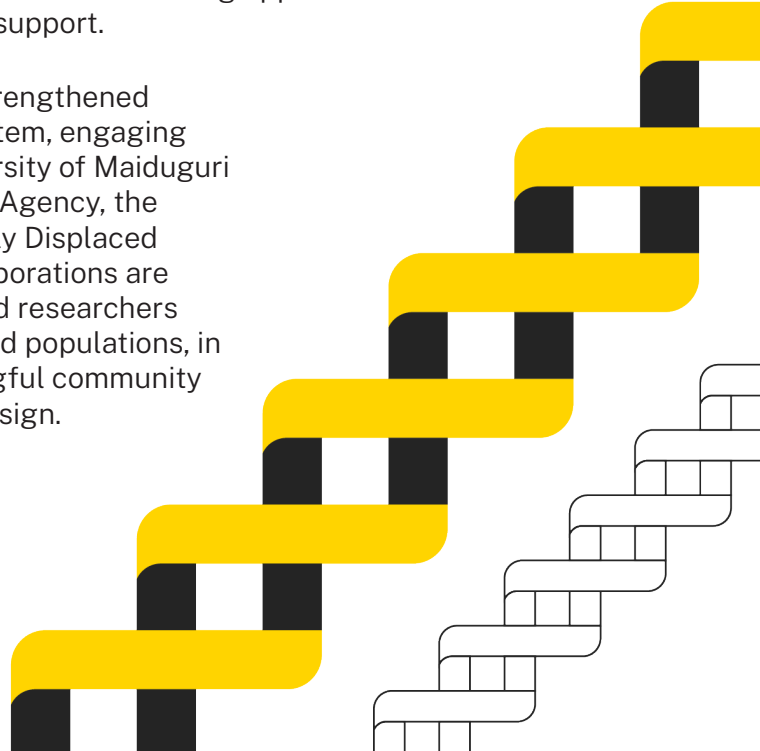
The RESETTLE-IDPs project, funded by the Creating Hope in Conflict (CHIC) program of the Grand Challenges Canada as well as the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR), represents a cornerstone initiative in advancing global mental health approaches within humanitarian contexts in Nigeria, addressing the severe psychological trauma and mental health burden experienced by internally displaced populations. This work exemplifies the center's commitment to developing scalable, evidence-based mental health interventions for vulnerable communities affected by complex emergencies — a priority area in contemporary global mental health research and practice.

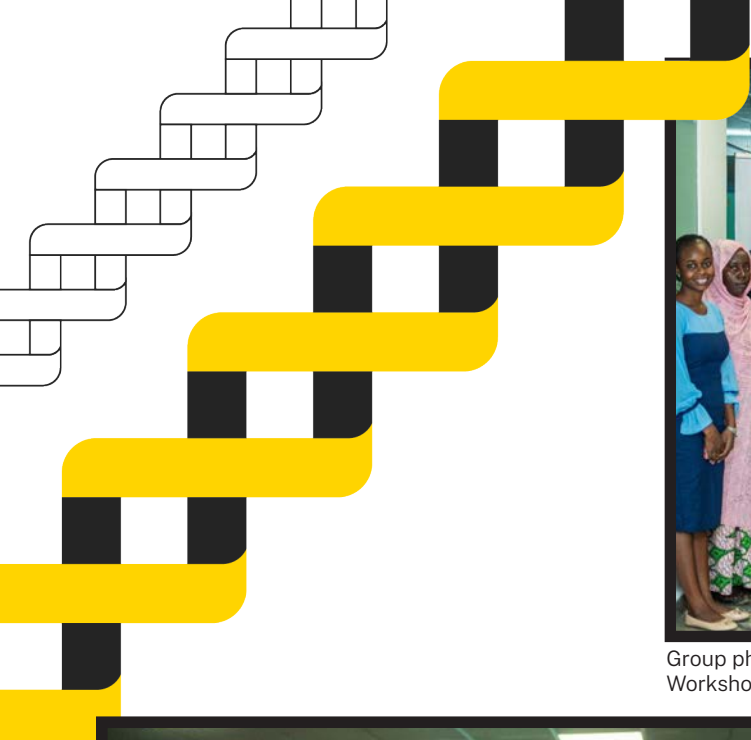
Operating within Nigeria's protracted humanitarian crisis, which has created one of Africa's largest internally displaced populations, this project applies innovative global mental health methodologies to address the disproportionate psychological suffering among youth and women. The initiative bridges critical research gaps in humanitarian mental health, testing interventions designed to be culturally responsive and implementable in low-resource, high-need settings where traditional mental health services are severely limited or absent.

Research Objectives:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of a culturally-adapted 12-week Life Skills Education (LSE) intervention in mitigating depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress symptoms among IDP youth and women, addressing a significant treatment gap in conflict-affected populations.
- To generate comparative evidence on digital versus in-person mental health intervention delivery models through rigorous assessment of peer support groups against WhatsApp-based virtual support groups — informing global mental health's digital transformation in humanitarian settings.
- To develop implementation frameworks for scaling psychological interventions across diverse humanitarian contexts globally, with particular attention to task-shifting approaches that enable non-specialist providers to deliver effective mental health support.

Dr. Ejemai Eboime's recent monitoring visit to Nigeria strengthened partnerships essential to the global mental health ecosystem, engaging key stakeholders including Brooks Insights Ltd, the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, the National Emergency Management Agency, the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons, and IDP community representatives. These collaborations are cultivating a transdisciplinary network of practitioners and researchers committed to advancing mental health equity for displaced populations, in alignment with global mental health principles of meaningful community engagement and contextually appropriate intervention design.





Group photo with subject matter experts at the RESETTLE-IDPs curriculum development Workshop in Abuja, Nigeria.



Dr. Eboime with Nigerian Co-PIs — Prof. Jidda Said (University of Maiduguri) and Chisom Obi-Jeff (Brooks Insights) at the RESETTLE-IDPs workshop.



Group work with experts during the RESETTLE-IDPs curriculum development workshop.

2. Advancing Global Mental Health through Education: Building Resilience through Inclusive Development and Gender-responsive Life Skills Education for Internally Displaced Adolescents in Nigeria (BRIDGE-IDAs)

The BRIDGE-IDAs project, funded by Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC), exemplifies innovative approaches in global mental health by targeting the critical intersections between educational attainment and psychological wellbeing among one of the world's most vulnerable populations – internally displaced adolescents in Nigeria. This initiative represents a significant advancement in preventive mental health programming within humanitarian contexts, recognizing education as a powerful protective factor against psychological distress and mental disorders in conflict-affected youth.

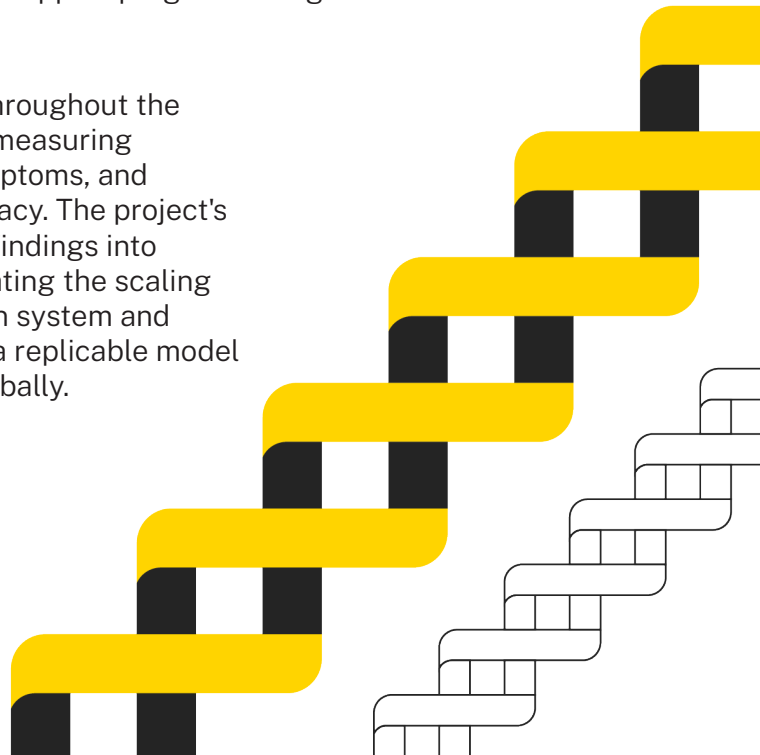
Led by the African Institute for Health Policy and Health Systems (AIHPHS) at David Umahi Federal University of Health Sciences in collaboration with Dalhousie University's Department of Psychiatry and Brooks Insights Ltd, this multi-disciplinary partnership embodies global mental health's core principles of cross-sector collaboration and contextually-grounded intervention development. The project targets three IDP settlements in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, engaging with a critical mental health need within Nigeria's displaced population of approximately 3.3 million people – of whom 60% are children and adolescents experiencing heightened risk for psychological trauma, developmental disruption, and mental health disorders.

Professor Jesse Chigozie Uneke (Vice Chancellor, David Umahi University of Health Sciences) serves as Principal Investigator, with Dr. Ejemai Eboime (Dalhousie University) and Chisom Obi-Jeff (Brooks Insights Ltd) as co-Principal Investigators – bringing together expertise in mental health systems strengthening trauma-informed interventions, and contextual adaptation of psychological support programs.

The project's three objectives directly address global mental health priorities:

- To generate rigorous evidence on the mental health impacts of a co-designed Life Skills Education curriculum, measuring not only educational outcomes but also psychological resilience factors, emotional regulation capacities, and symptoms of common mental disorders among displaced adolescents
- To mobilize knowledge through strategic engagement with policymakers and IDP communities, building mental health literacy and reducing stigma around psychological needs in humanitarian settings
- To strengthen sustainable mental health service delivery by enhancing local capacity to implement gender-responsive and trauma-informed psychosocial support programs integrated within educational frameworks

Comprehensive mental health assessment is integrated throughout the evaluation framework, with validated psychometric tools measuring changes in anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and positive psychological assets like resilience and self-efficacy. The project's knowledge mobilization strategy emphasizes translating findings into actionable mental health policy recommendations, facilitating the scaling of successful interventions within both Nigeria's education system and humanitarian response mechanisms, potentially creating a replicable model for mental health integration in humanitarian contexts globally.



3. The Implementation Research for the strengthening of screening practices and the adoption of IV Ferric Carboxymaltose for the treatment of Maternal Anemia (IVON-IS) project

The IVON-IS project, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is a three-year (2022-2025) implementation research initiative that directly addresses critical intersections between maternal anemia and global mental health outcomes. Prof. Bosede Afolabi of the University of Lagos serves as Principal Investigator, with Dr. Ejemai Eboeime as Co-Investigator and Implementation Science Methodological lead. Building upon two preceding clinical trials, this project tackles the complex barriers in maternal anemia care pathways — a condition that not only contributes significantly to maternal mortality but also precipitates severe mental health consequences including maternal depression, postpartum anxiety, and cognitive impairments that can persist long after childbirth.

The mental health implications extend intergenerationally, as maternal anemia is strongly associated with compromised infant neurological and psychological development. By improving maternal anemia care through optimized screening and intravenous iron therapy, the IVON-IS project addresses a fundamental but often overlooked driver of mental health burden in low-resource settings. This holistic approach aligns with current global mental health frameworks that emphasize addressing underlying physiological contributors to psychological distress.

The IVON-IS project concluded with a stakeholders' dissemination workshop in Lagos, Nigeria on February 24, 2025, convening 108 diverse stakeholders from mental health, maternal health, and public health sectors. The workshop highlighted findings on improving maternal anemia care while emphasizing the significant mental health benefits observed in both mothers and infants. Local and international media coverage of the event underscored the project's contribution to integrating mental health considerations into maternal health interventions — a critical advancement for global mental health practice in resource-limited environments.



Dr. Eboeime addressing the Nigerian Press at the IVON-IS stakeholder workshop.



At the IVON-IS "gallery walk" poster session.



Photshoot with IVON-IS research team from the Centre for Clinical Trials, Research and Implementation Science (CCTRIS), University of Lagos.

4. Advancing Global Mental Health Policy Integration: Strategic Engagement with the Federal Ministry of Health, Abuja, Nigeria

Dr. Ejemai Eboeime conducted high-level advocacy meetings with key policymakers at the Federal Ministry of Health in Abuja, including the Special Advisor to the Honourable Minister of Health, Dr. Emmanuel Odu, and senior officials from the National Primary Health Care Development Agency. These strategic engagements centered on integrating global mental health priorities into Nigeria's national health frameworks and highlighting the mental health dimensions of the center's three ongoing research initiatives.

The discussions emphasized the urgent need for policy reforms to address the significant mental health treatment gap in Nigeria, particularly focusing on how maternal conditions like anemia contribute to the psychological distress burden among vulnerable populations. Dr. Eboeime presented emerging evidence from the center's research on innovative approaches to integrating mental health screening and support within existing primary healthcare structures, demonstrating cost-effective pathways to scale psychological interventions in resource-constrained settings.

These high-level consultations have established pathways for embedding global mental health expertise within national policy development processes, creating opportunities for research-policy collaborations that strengthen mental health service delivery systems. Additionally, the meetings explored capacity-building initiatives to enhance policymakers' understanding of implementation science methodologies for mental health integration, fostering a policy environment more responsive to psychological dimensions of health across Nigeria's diverse communities and healthcare contexts.



Dr. Eboeime and the Special Adviser to the Honourable Minister of Health, Dr. Emmanuel Odu.