

Newsletter – September 2020

Welcome to our inaugural AfriPaedLF newsletter to sum up our first year as a group working to support lung health in African children. The COVID pandemic has interrupted our first efforts of starting 2020 with lung function working group inspiration, however with the COVID cases going down in South Africa we are motivated more than ever to make this a useful collaboration of all people interested in paediatric lung function measurements.



This group was envisioned to provide a supportive network of paediatric respiratory health clinicians and scientists to facilitate improved access to high quality lung function testing and collaboration across the continent.

The Working Group Aims

- To connect those working in lung function and to offer a forum for support and discussion
- To provide a resource of up to date documents that include international and local recommendations and standards; feedback from international and local groups on recent key updates and African paediatric lung function research (published and not)
- To develop locally relevant standards for infant and preschool lung function
- To advocate for improved access to cost effective and good quality testing
- To support research, encouraging collaborations, that will strengthen the use of lung function in the prevention, diagnosis and management of lung disease in African children

Since our initial call for interest in January 2019 we have established a group of 24 researchers and clinicians, from all 5 regions in Africa; all working with lung function in African infants and children. See working group details below. We have had two teleconference meetings and one face to face meeting at the South African Thoracic Society Congress July 2019, Pretoria, South Africa. This has allowed us to connect with each other, establish a directory of current research projects utilizing lung function testing and identify areas of common interests and goals. Apart from the group meetings, this connection has led to a number of researchers supporting each other in training, technical trouble shooting, study planning and aligning standard operating procedures.

This year our members have been involved both regionally and globally with efforts to improve lung function tools in infants and children with representation on the PATS Spirometry Working Group, ERS Spirometry Committee, International Collaboration to improve Respiratory Health in Children (INCIRCLE) INCIRCLE and the Global Lung Function Initiative (GLI) ERS Clinical Research Collaborations; paediatric lead in the inaugural International Post TB Symposium (www.post-tuberculosis.com) and publication of the Paediatric and Adult African Spirometry (PAAS) data . This

Newsletter- African Paediatric Lung Function Working Group, Q4 2020

has ensured that African data and interests are included and considered in global efforts to improve diagnosis and management of child respiratory disease.

We have formalized our group within the structures of the Pan African Thoracic society (<https://panafricanthoracic.org/working-groups/african-paediatric-lung-function>). This has allowed us a dedicated online hub where relevant resources have been uploaded and are available to all. We have also confirmed collaboration with the ERS Infant and Preschool Lung Function Working group, with **Dr Katheryn Ramsey** (Current chair of ERS working group) and **Dr Shannon Simpson** (member of ATS/ ERS taskforce on standards for the Forced Oscillation Technique) agreeing to participate as international expert friends on our group. We hope this will allow both expert peer support and review, and opportunities for international collaborations going forward. See the website for more background information on our international expert contributors.

Plans for Q4 2020 and 2021

We hope to strengthen this group during the last quarter of 2020 towards 2021 with the following planned activities and outputs:

- Quarterly news and updates: this will be collated and circulated to the group prior to our meetings; as well as being put on the AfriPaedLF website for reference and interest
- Quarterly meetings: teleconference which will be recorded and shared
 - 01-OCT-2020 15h00- 16h00 SATS; “Lung function measurements in times of COVID”
- Update directory of planned and ongoing clinical research projects
- Establish open communication chat group for questions and support
- Update website information with:
 - Guidelines and standards for infant and preschool lung function testing
 - Relevant interesting articles
 - African lung function data
 - Shared standard operating procedures and protocols
 - Working group members information
- Planned working group projects: feedback from each group at October meeting
 - Reference ranges: PAAS project: African spirometry reference data (Masekela, Gray); Oscillometry (Chaya, Gray); GLI projects and African data (Masekela, Gray); updated infant lung function references data (Verwey)
 - Preschool lung function review: lead by Dr Shaakira Chaya
 - Infant lung function review: still be confirmed

Finally, the usefulness and impact of this group will only be as good as the members input; so please all do give feedback, share ideas and insights, put your hand up to get involved; and be leaders in your region in growing the effective use of lung function in better understanding, preventing and managing lung disease in African children. Email us on afripaedlf@panafricanthoracic.org

Introduction of working group members

This is...

Because we will likely not have face to face meetings in the coming period, we wanted to use the newsletter to get to know each other better. Dr Rebecca Nantanda to be the first person to introduce herself.

Dr. Rebecca Nantanda is a Paediatrician and Senior Research Fellow at Makerere University Lung Institute, Uganda and a Post-Doctoral Research Associate at Liverpool School of Medicine (LSTM), UK. She has been involved in clinical care and research on respiratory diseases in children for the past 12 years with specific focus on pneumonia and asthma. She is also involved in pre-service and in-service training of health care professionals. She is a co-investigator on a birth cohort study on early life determinants of lung health in Uganda under the IMPALA Programme at LSTM. She is leading infant lung function collection in this birth cohort. Dr Nantanda is a co-chair of the Asthma Management Working Group of The UNION.



Diary highlights:

1 October: 15h00-16h00 (SAST time): Working group meeting – “Lung function measurements in times of COVID”

20-24 October: the 51st Union world conference on lung health – Virtual meeting. Program to follow.

For full list of working group and introduction to our international experts:

<https://panafricanthoracic.org/working-groups/african-paediatric-lung-function>