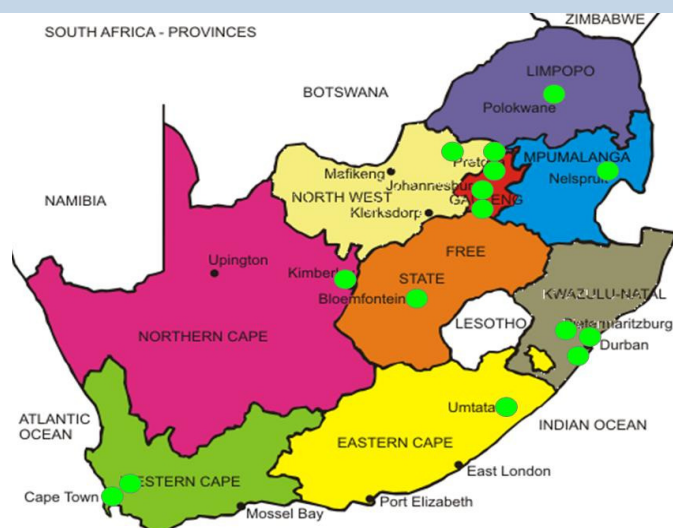




Volume 39, October 2013



Third Quarter

We're three-quarters the way through the year and GERMS-SA is continuing to embrace the changes happening within our bustling surveillance programme: the loss of some enhanced sites and addition of others, the continued roll-out across the provinces of TB surveillance, the successful progression of the invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD) case-control study, the on-going cryptococcal screening programme, and the recent implementation at pilot sites of cellular phone-based clinical data collection. The latter initiative, termed GEDI (GERMS-SA Electronic Data collection Information system), got off the ground on 1 August this year at Steve Biko Pretoria Academic, Helen Joseph, and Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospitals, and has just started at Polokwane Hospital. Chris Hani Baragwanath and Dr George Mukhari Hospitals are next on the list. An update on GEDI will be available in the next volume of the newsletter.

In this photo-filled edition, GERMS-SA activities are highlighted, with feedback from the latest Surveillance Officer meeting (pg 2), an account of the NICD Heritage Day celebrations (pg 4), a summary of conducted site visits (pg 7), and an update on the IPD case-control study (pg 9). Additionally, we celebrate the addition of more GERMS-SA babies (pg 12), welcome new staff (pg 13), and bid farewell to others (pg 15), and include a table of surveillance organisms and sites for laboratories (pg 16).

A reminder that the 2012 GERMS-SA Annual Report was distributed in September and is available for download on the NICD website at <http://www.nicd.ac.za>.

Penny Crowther-Gibson

GERMS-SA Surveillance Officer meeting

Penny Crowther-Gibson

The second GERMS-SA SO meeting for 2013 took place on 29-30 August at the Genesis Conference Centre in Sandringham, Johannesburg. It was well attended by surveillance officers from across the country and by GERMS-SA members from the various NICD centres. Following the theme of "Back to basics", the meeting involved a review of the basics of surveillance and the organisms under surveillance, as well as feed-back on GERMS-SA surveillance activities and studies, such as the IPD case-control, cryptococcal antigen screening, and amphotericin-B toxicity prevention studies.

A great aspect of this meeting was that most of the talks and all of the chairing of sessions were done by the SOs, providing them the opportunity to perform analyses and/or create presentations, as requested by them at previous meetings. The admin staff were also given the chance to present on their field of work. Everyone enjoyed listening to and learning from their peers.

Thank you and well done to those sites that performed well and met their targets and to the SOs that won prizes! We look forward to revealing even better results at the next meeting.



SO Meeting group Attendees of the August 2013 GERMS-SA Surveillance Officer meeting at the Genesis Conference Centre, Johannesburg



Knowing your surveillance programme Quiz Master Nevashan Govender (left) revealing the answers to the challenging quiz; and Ulenta Chetty (right) receiving a coveted prize



SO presentations Nazila Shalabi (centre) presenting on 'NTS in paediatric patients in the Western Cape' in a session chaired by Dikeledi Leshaba (left)



Question time Serious discussions between the session chair, Zodwa Kgaphola (left), and the presenter, Susan Meiring (centre)

NICD Heritage Day

Penny Crowther-Gibson

The 24th of September is Heritage Day - a day on which South Africans celebrate cultural heritage and embrace the diverse traditions and values that contribute to the "rainbow nation". On 20 September, the NICD celebrated this day with each centre decorating a stall according to a different culture, and with staff wearing traditional garments and sharing traditional meals. GERMS-SA did a great job of representing various South African cultures. The Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response (DPHSR) - the centre in which the core staff reside - decorated a Sotho stall with traditional artefacts and information. The Centre for Enteric Diseases (CED) represented the Swati culture; the Centre for Opportunistic, Tropical and Hospital Infections (COTHI) decorated an Afrikaans stall; and the winning centre - the Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis (CRDM) - displayed an imaginative Tswana stall. Well done to all concerned for embracing what Heritage Day is all about!

Sotho culture Members of the DPHSR in front of their stall (look out for Penny Crowther-Gibson, Bulelwa Zigana, Sonwabo Lindani, Vanessa Quan, Mmakgomo Rakhudu, and Nevashan Govender from GERMS-SA)



Sotho man Sonwabo Lindani embracing the Sotho tradition



Diversity (Clockwise from top left) CED staff dressed in the Swati tradition; the Sepedi and Xhosa stalls; one of the prize-winning stalls decorated to reflect the Indian culture; and the winning Tswana stall displaying traditional artefacts





Tswana culture Members of CRDM posing in front of their stall (look out for Nireshni Naidoo, Sarona Lengana, Claire von Mollendorf, and the IPD data clerks from GERMS-SA)



Afrikaans culture (Left) COTHI staff at their Afrikaans stall, which included a miniature ox-wagon; and (right) Marshagne Smith and John Frean rocking it Voortrekker style!



GERMS-SA around the country - Site visits

Penny Crowther-Gibson

Site visits were made to laboratories and hospitals in 6 of the 9 provinces this quarter:

Free State: Bongani, Boitumelo, Sebokeng, and Universitas

Gauteng: Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic, Dr George Mukhari, and Steve Biko Pretoria Academic

Limpopo: Mankweng

North West: Tshepong

Northern Cape: Kimberley

Western Cape: Ampath Cape Town, Groote Schuur, and Karl Bremer



Bongani Hospital, Welkom Arvinda Sooka (right) and microbiology laboratory staff take time out from training for a photo, 22 July 2013



Nobody look at the camera! Mmakgomo Rakhudu (left) and laboratory staff during a site visit to Boitemelo Hospital in Kroonstad, 23 July 2013



Johannesburg Mmakgomo Rakhudu (seated) meets with Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital SOs, (from left) Anna Motsi, Fiona Timber, and Zodwa Kgaphola, 5 August 2013

Kimberley Site visit to the microbiology laboratory at Kimberley Hospital, 25 July 2013



Ga-Rankuwa Surveillance Officer Ophtia Koaho (centre) with staff at Dr George Mukhari Hospital, 7 August 2013

Invasive Pneumococcal Disease case-control study update

Claire von Mollendorf

The invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD) case-control study, which enrolls children eligible to receive the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine through the Expanded Programme on Immunisation in South Africa, is continuing well into its third year of enrolment. To date (16 October 2013) the surveillance officers have screened 1117 children < 5 years of age with IPD for the case-control study. Of these children, 864 were screened for the PCV-7 study and 253 for the PCV-13 study. Out of the total children screened for the study, 692 children were age-eligible (439 for the PCV-7 and 253 for the PCV-13 study) and only 36 of these eligible children were not successfully enrolled into the study. The numbers enrolled per site are shown in Tables 1 and 2. In total, 549 cases have already been closed in the study (391 for PCV-7 and 158 for PCV-13). Overall closed HIV-negative cases have an average of 5 controls and HIV-positive cases 3.9 controls.

In terms of study progress, the target for HIV-uninfected children enrolled into the PCV-13 component of the study with vaccine-type IPD has been exceeded. The enrolment of HIV-infected cases is slightly below target, but has improved since 2012 due the addition of new sites to the study.

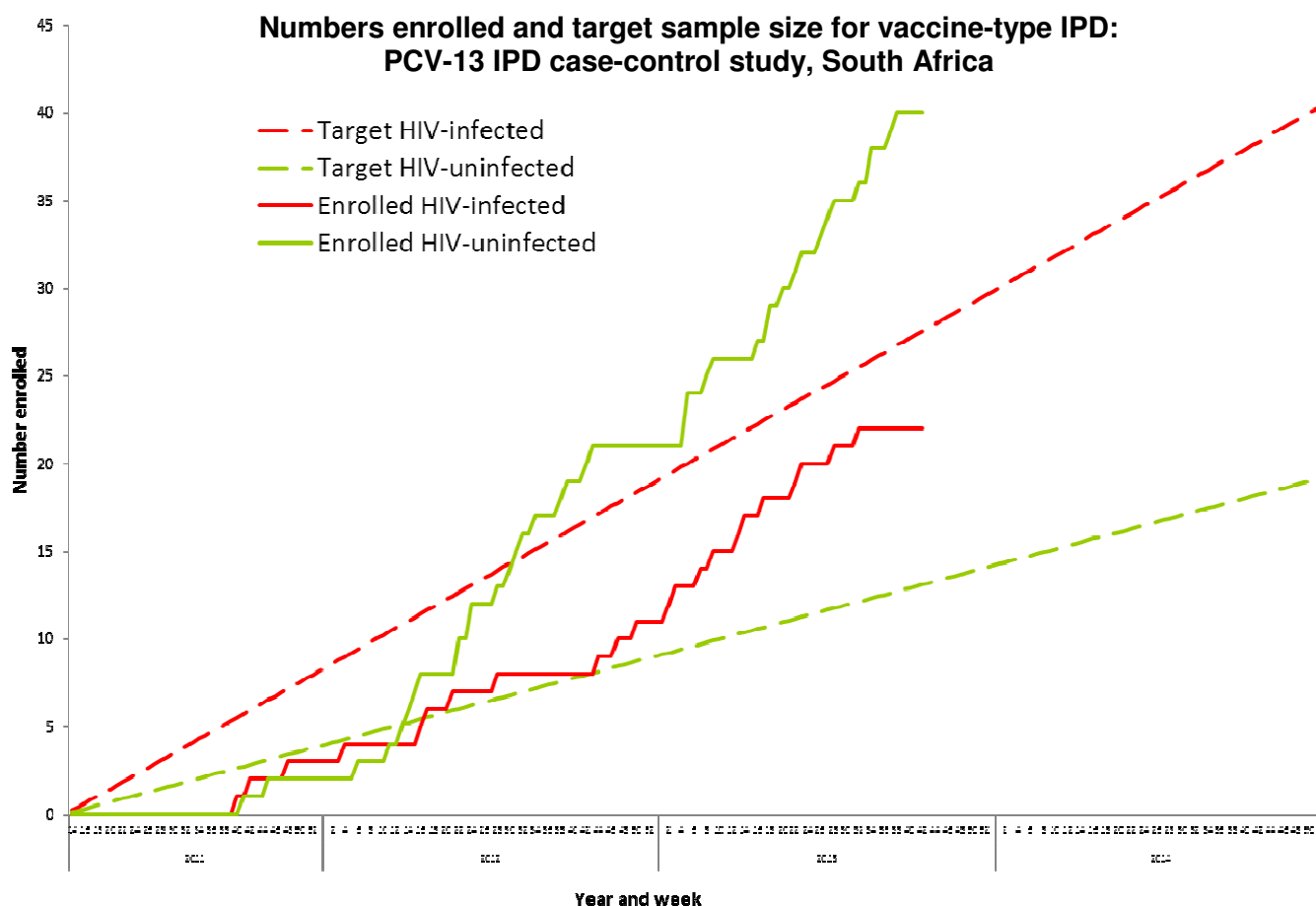


Table 1 Number of open and closed cases and controls by site and HIV serostatus, PCV-7 IPD case-control study, South Africa, as on 16 October 2013

Facility	Closed				Open			
	HIV-negative		HIV-positive		HIV-negative		HIV-positive	
	cases	controls	cases	controls	cases	controls	cases	controls
Addington	15	60	3	12	1	2	0	0
Charlotte Maxeke	23	116	16	57	0	0	0	0
Chris Hani Baragwanath	42	202	23	109	1	0	0	0
Edendale/Greys	9	42	5	24	0	0	0	0
George Mukhari	8	39	2	13	0	0	1	2
Kalafong	6	31	7	26	0	0	0	0
Kimberley	14	56	8	24	0	0	1	3
King Edward	5	17	3	7	0	0	0	0
Klerksdorp	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	0
Mankweng	2	11	1	5	0	0	0	0
Natalspruit	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Nelson Mandela	8	32	2	4	0	0	2	1
Northdale	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pelonomi/Universitas	18	101	4	11	2	4	0	0
Polokwane	3	16	1	2	0	0	0	0
Rahima Moosa	26	134	20	89	0	0	0	0
Red Cross/ Groote Schuur	40	214	12	36	0	0	0	0
RK Khan	4	23	14	48	0	0	0	0
Rob Ferreira	1	4	5	10	0	0	0	0
Rustenberg	5	22	3	9	0	0	0	0
Steve Biko/Tshwane	4	17	8	22	1	4	0	0
Themba	3	17	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tygerberg	15	66	3	8	0	0	1	5
Total	251	1220	140	516	8	12	7	13

Table 2 Number of open and closed cases and controls by site and HIV serostatus, PCV-13 IPD case-control study, South Africa, as on 16 October 2013

Facility	Closed				Open			
	HIV-negative		HIV-positive		HIV-negative		HIV-positive	
	cases	controls	cases	controls	cases	controls	cases	controls
Addington	2	10	0	0	1	0	1	0
Charlotte Maxeke	14	81	2	8	2	5	2	2
Chris Hani Baragwanath	26	130	7	41	8	12	2	4
Edendale/Greys	3	12	0	0	3	4	0	0
George Mukhari	3	16	4	17	0	0	3	4
Kalafong	4	19	1	3	1	5	1	5
Kimberley	3	12	1	6	1	0	2	5
King Edward	4	20	1	2	4	5	0	0
Klerksdorp	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	1
Mankweng	2	12	0	0	1	0	0	0
Natalspruit	1	4	0	0	4	10	2	0
Nelson Mandela	5	20	1	2	3	8	3	1
Northdale	1	4	0	0	1	0	1	4
Pelonomi/Universitas	10	51	0	0	3	13	2	4
Polokwane	2	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rahima Moosa	14	74	2	9	3	11	7	10
Red Cross/ Groote Schuur	23	130	1	4	4	8	4	2
RK Khan	1	6	2	6	1	0	1	0
Rob Ferreira	2	13	0	0	2	0	1	1
Rustenberg	4	11	1	0	0	0	0	0
Steve Biko/Tshwane	2	10	0	0	3	3	1	5
Themba	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Tygerberg	7	43	2	7	2	3	0	0
Total	133	691	25	105	51	89	34	48

New beginnings - GERMS-SA babies

Penny Crowther-Gibson

Olga Hattingh - Technologist at CRDM

Olga's little girl Quinn Snyman (right) was born on 23 January 2013. Isn't she perfect?



Ashika Singh-Moodley - Scientist at COTHI

Ashika's baby boy Kiran Joshua Moodley (left) was born on 16 May 2013. Welcome to the world!

Cheryl Cohen and Anne von Gottberg - Heads of CRDM

Cheryl and Anne welcomed their little twin boys, Daniel and Joshua (right), on 14 August 2013. Congratulations to the moms and big sister Sarah!



New beginnings - Staff

Penny Crowther-Gibson

GERMS-SA was fortunate to welcome two current staff members into new positions this quarter. Cecilia Miller, a Western Cape surveillance officer at Groote Schuur, Red Cross Children's, and Victoria Hospitals since the inception of GERMS-SA in 2003, has now taken up the position of Field Project Coordinator based at Groote Schuur Hospital. Similarly, Mmakgomo Rakhudu worked as a North West province surveillance officer at Job Shimankana Tabane Hospital in Rustenburg since 2008 and is now a Field Project Coordinator at the NICD in Johannesburg. Congratulations on your new appointments and welcome to the team, we hope you enjoy your new roles!

Profile of Mmakgomo Rakhudu

Tell me a little about yourself

I was born in Rustenburg in the North West province. I am 4 months away from the age that people usually say life begins at... Haha! I have two lovely children, Tshepo and Kabelo. I have been a qualified professional nurse for 16 years and have been working for GERMS for the past 5 years as a surveillance officer. My passion in life is about good health. Little things can actually make my day. I love sea food. I am afraid of heights but would love to do bungy jumping one day!



What made you decide to take up this position?

I wanted to personally develop myself and my career and learn new skills. I also wanted to share and impart my knowledge and experience in surveillance to upcoming surveillance officers. I always dreamed of being a leader and this is like a dream come true.

Now that you are in management, have you learnt anything new about GERMS so far?

Yes, I learned that GERMS is bigger than I thought and that there is a lot of good work being done here.

Have you adjusted to living in Johannesburg?

Joburg is big and doesn't really have a homely feel like Rustenburg but I try to enjoy every moment.

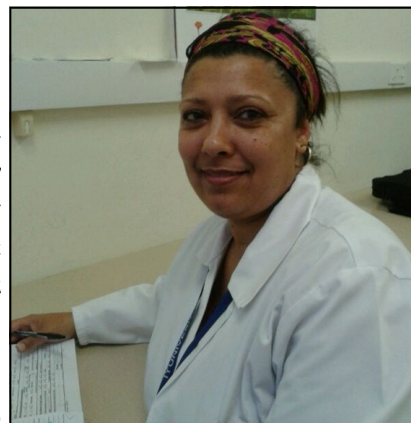
Anything else you'd like to add?

I am very proud to be a part of the GERMS management team and I am hoping to advance my career even further while I am still here.

Profile of Cecilia Miller

Tell me a little about yourself

I was born and bred in Cape Town. I am married, have 1 biological child, 4 stepchildren and 5 grandchildren. My family will always come first in my life. I trained and qualified as a professional nurse and midwife at Tygerberg Hospital. I am also qualified as a Psychiatric and Paediatric nurse. The last ten years of my career I have been working as a Surveillance Officer at NHLS.



What made you decide to take up this position?

The reason for taking up the position was it was time for a change - to broaden my knowledge. To enhance my skills, e.g. computer, management skills.

Now that you are in management, have you learnt anything new about GERMS so far?

As an SO I was collecting data, now that I am in management it is more about reviewing the data for accuracy and compliance by SOs. Providing ongoing feedback to other members of the NMSU team. To make sure your site is functioning well.

Anything else you'd like to add?

The past few months have been hectic, not just adjusting to this new job, but also health-wise. The transition from SO to being a coordinator has been very challenging and a steep learning curve. I have learnt a lot and am not yet comfortable with audits, but am looking forward to new challenges.

Profile of Sarona Lengana

We are also lucky to have Sarona Lengana as the new epidemiology medical officer joining the Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis at the NICD. It's great to have you as part of GERMS-SA and hope you enjoy the experience!

Tell me a little about yourself

I'm from Mpumalanga, but have been living in Pretoria for over 14 years. I qualified as a medical doctor in 2009 at UCT.



What did you do prior to joining us?

I was finishing off my community service year in a clinic in Dobsonville, Soweto.

What made you decide to take up this position?

I have an interest in research. One can't see patients and not know how to interpret studies.

What are you enjoying about your job so far?

Handling data, interpreting it, learning how to come up with the numbers, looking at it from a different perspective. I enjoy health economics, and very little cost-effectiveness analyses are in the pipeline, so it's a gold mine for me.

Anything else you'd like to add?

No wonder NICD is always in the top 5 employers in the scientific world — it has world-class staff, providing relevant research to impact policy decision; it's a great place for up-and-coming researchers to learn.

Moving on - Farewells

Penny Crowther-Gibson

At the end of August we wished farewell to our Field Project Coordinator, Karen Mqokozo, who had earlier in the year moved from Johannesburg to KwaZulu-Natal to manage surveillance sites for that province. Karen has left GERMS-SA for a management position in the trauma ward at Netcare Umhlanga Hospital. We wish her well!



Goodbyes Karen Mqokozo receiving her parting gift from Vanessa Quan at the August SO Meeting

Due to unfortunate constraints, our large team of surveillance officers at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital had to be reduced in size this year. At the end of September we wished a sad farewell to three of the team: Busi Mbatha, a surveillance officer with GERMS-SA for 8 years; Joy Appolis (7 years); and Hazel Mzolo (3 years). We would like to thank them for their work within GERMS-SA and wish them the best in their future careers.



Bara sisters From left, Hazel Mzolo, Joy Appolis, and Busi Mbatha

General Information for Surveillance Laboratories

Surveillance organisms and sites

Please submit the following bacterial and fungal pathogens to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) on Dorset Transport Media with a completed sterile site isolate form or stool isolate form or DISALab/ TrakCare lab form.

Pathogen	Specimen	Lab tests	NICD Unit
<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> <i>Haemophilus</i> spp. <i>Neisseria meningitidis</i>	All normally sterile site specimens, e.g. CSF, blood, pleural fluid, peritoneal fluid, pericardial fluid, joint fluid, tissue, etc.	Culture positive OR Consistent Gram stain plus latex antigen test positive	CRDM
<i>Salmonella</i> spp. (including <i>Salmonella</i> Typhi) <i>Shigella</i> spp.	Any specimen	Culture positive	CED
Diarrhoeagenic <i>E. coli</i> <i>Vibrio cholerae</i>	Gastrointestinal specimens, e.g. stools, rectal swabs, etc.	Culture positive	CED
<i>Cryptococcus</i> spp.	Any specimen	Culture positive OR Latex positive OR India ink positive	COTHI (MRL)
† <i>Candida</i> spp.	Blood culture only	Culture positive	COTHI (MRL)
* <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	Blood cultures only	Culture positive	COTHI (AMRRL)

†Chris Hani Baragwanath, Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic, Helen Joseph, Groote Schuur, Steve Biko Pretoria Academic, Tygerberg

*Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic, Steve Biko Pretoria Academic, Helen Joseph/ Rahima Moosa Mother and Child Hospital

This newsletter was compiled and edited by Penny Crowther-Gibson, Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response. Please send any queries, recommendations or contributions to: Vanessa Quan vanessaq@nicd.ac.za; Tel: 011 386 6012