



Dr. Jane von Gaudecker

Improving Epilepsy Care in Western Kenya

Dr. Jane von Gaudecker is Assistant Professor, Science of Nursing Care, at the Indiana University School of Nursing. She received a doctorate in nursing at the University of Virginia in 2015. A native of India, Dr. von Gaudecker has dedicated her professional career to neuroscience and epilepsy nursing, with a particular focus on underserved epilepsy patients in Western Kenya. Her research program focuses on advancing epilepsy treatment initiation and adherence in resource-poor settings, specifically by collaborating with a multidisciplinary team in Kenya to improve access to care, decrease health disparities, and improve quality of life.

The purpose of Dr. von Gaudecker's study is two-fold: to build epilepsy research and treatment capacity and to understand why some people with epilepsy return for treatment follow-up while a significant majority of others do not in western Kenya. The aim is to design interventions to improve antiseizure medication treatment in currently untreated people with epilepsy in this region. Knowledge about illness experience and treatment behaviors is essential to the development of patient-centered interventions that are culturally tailored, respectful of, and responsive to individual needs. The project will be conducted under the auspices of a well-established consortium of multiple North American universities, led by Indiana University and Moi University in Kenya, called AMPATH (Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare). AMPATH has the largest research infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa but so far has not focused on epilepsy or neurology research. Leveraging the AMPATH partnership, Dr. von Gaudecker will build a research program to improve epilepsy care outcomes and build the infrastructure necessary to deliver state of the art epilepsy care in western Kenya.

This is the first study to explore illness experiences and treatment behaviors of newly diagnosed people with epilepsy in western Kenya. At the completion of the proposed project, the research team under Dr. von Gaudecker's leadership will have (1) created a sustainable Epilepsy Medical Record System to track people with epilepsy; (2) obtained preliminary data to support development and testing of culturally sensitive interventions aimed at improving antiseizure medication treatment follow-up in people with epilepsy; and (3) created a skilled local research team to collect and analyze data. The proposed study and subsequent intervention efforts will expand the research capabilities of Moi University and the Moi Teaching and Research Hospital (MTRH) in the field of epilepsy treatment adherence and care outcomes. Apart from including a multidisciplinary collaborative team from Kenya in the study, the project will aim to train Kenyan graduate students to conduct behavioral research. A cohort of graduate students will be involved as research team members.

The award funds will be used in three ways: 1) training future researchers and collaborators; 2) developing collaborations with Community Health Workers; 3) supporting a Kenyan researcher to participate in a scientific conference.

Dr. von Gaudecker's work in international scientific cooperation is impressive and well-documented. Her service has included Chair of the American Epilepsy Society's Global Health Special Interest Group, and

secretary of the International League Against Epilepsy North American Region Global Health Task Force. She also chairs the AMPATH consortium nursing team, which consists of nurses from the Indiana University School of Nursing, Indiana University Health, Moi University School of Nursing, MTRH, and the University of Texas School of Nursing. In that role, she supports and ensures collaborations and connections between US and Kenya professionals and catalyzes nursing within the AMPATH consortium. In her long-term work to build indigenous capacity in Kenya to develop scientific knowledge and apply it directly to address key health issues, Dr. von Gaudecker exemplifies Victor Rabinowitch's dedication to promoting international science collaboration with Africa to enhance the quality of life for all people.