

# Center for Family Health Research (formerly Projet San Francisco)



Translating science  
into global health impact

Pioneering evidence-based, cost-effective, couples-focused strategies for prevention of HIV and unplanned pregnancy



Center for Family Health Research (CFHR) is a member of the Rwanda Zambia HIV Research Group (RZHRG), which is recognized as a global leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS. CFHR was established in Kigali in 1986 in collaboration with the Centre Hospitalier de Kigali (CHK), the National HIV/AIDS Reference Laboratory, and the Ministry of Health's National AIDS Control Program (PNLS) and has been providing clinical care and counseling for HIV-infected persons for more than 30 years. CFHR has extensive experience in HIV research and was the pioneer for couples voluntary counseling and testing (CVCT).

In 2009, CFHR was established as a Center of Excellence in CVCT and in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Zambia-Emory HIV Research Project. CFHR has developed the CVCT Intervention and Training Curriculum and has contributed to making CVCT a standard of care in all government health facilities in Rwanda.

CFHR facilities consist of a laboratory; archive room; liquid nitrogen plant; office-building that houses data management and finance and administration; and two pharmacy sections, one for storage and management of investigational products and another for routine daily medication for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), antiretroviral therapy, and family planning supplies and consumables. CFHR's two clinic buildings contain 10 fully equipped examination and counseling rooms.

The clinic team has the capacity to conduct both clinical research activities such as vaccine trials and epidemiologic studies of HIV and other infectious tropical diseases such as malaria and Ebola. CFHR also provides HIV prevention services and clinical care to

HIV-infected individuals, patients with symptoms of STIs, female sex workers, and offers voluntary medical male circumcision for HIV prevention and family planning services. All clinic staff are trained on Good Clinical Practice (GCP), Good Participatory Practice (GPP), and Human Subject Protection, to ensure the highest quality standards in safeguarding the rights and welfare of people who participate in research.

## Laboratory capacity

The CFHR laboratory is equipped to perform parasitology, HIV and other STI testing, biochemistry, hematology, urinalysis, peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) isolation and cryopreservation, flow cytometry, and ELISpot assays. These are crucial to CFHR's work and expertise in analysis of mucosal samples for HIV prevention research. CFHR's lab consists of four main sections: a clinical lab, a molecular biology lab, an immunology lab, and a sample repository facility. The clinical lab performs safety testing for clinical trials and epidemiologic studies, while the immunology lab processes PBMC isolation, performs ELISpot assays, and prepares specimens for testing.



CFHR (formerly PSF) site located in Kicukiro, Kigali, Rwanda

The molecular biology lab runs tests to understand how the immune responses link with a disease's characteristics to define the unique immune responses. The repository section is used for sample repository and stock control. The lab is also equipped with one distiller and has a liquid nitrogen plant. The lab is enrolled in a comprehensive external quality assessment program facilitated by Contract Lab Services in

Johannesburg, South Africa. The site undergoes Good Clinical Laboratory Practice (GCLP) assessment twice a year and accreditation audits currently once a year. CFHR's laboratory is GCLP accredited.

of government health centers and community health workers that support recruitment and participate in research activities through regular meetings and community events.

## People

CFHR currently employs over 140 staff, a majority of whom are field staff. The team is composed of study physicians, project coordinators, pharmacists, research nurses, counselors, laboratory scientists and technologists, data technicians, as well as administrative and financial managers and support staff. The team is headed by Etienne Karita, M.D., M.Sc., MSPH, director. The academic partner of CFHR is the U.S.-based Emory University, where the PSF founder, Susan Allen, M.D., M.P.H., is a professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine of the School of Medicine.

## Community Engagement

CFHR has robust community engagement programs including a community advisory board and a network

## IAVI-supported activities

- IAVI has been working in partnership with PSF/CFHR since 2003 and has supported the establishment of a clinical research facility in order to conduct IAVI-sponsored epidemiological studies and Phase I/II HIV vaccine trials. CFHR's research experience in clinical trials includes five IAVI-sponsored Phase I HIV vaccine trials including Rwanda's first HIV vaccine trial in 2005, as well as the first trial in Africa of a replicating vector vaccine for HIV (IAVI S001).
- The molecular biology lab at CFHR is actively involved in the ADVANCE program. The lab has the capacity to perform HIV-1 full genome amplification and works closely with collaborators at Emory University on the characterization of the biological and genetic properties of the transmitted founder virus and its interaction with the host.

### Projet San Francisco (PSF) Center for Family Health Research (CFHR)

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