Pediatric RESEARCH

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COMMENT

# Biocommentary

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I grew up in Mbozi, southwestern highlands of Tanzania. I live in Morogoro town on the slopes of Uluguru Mountain that form the eastern arc biodiversity hotspot. I attended school in Mbozi-Mbeya and the Livestock training college in Dar es Salaam. My research career benefits from diverse academic and professional training in zoology, microbiology, and rodents. While on job at Sokoine University of Agriculture, I enrolled for BSc in zoology/botany at the Open University of Tanzania and later MSc (zoology) at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, focusing on systematics of the African spiny mice. I joined the Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology, Berlin, Germany for doctoral degree studying tuberculosis detection using the African giant-pouched rats, an innovative diagnostic technology being developed by APOPO in partnership with Sokoine University of Agriculture. My work on specific TB odor compounds detected by rats opened avenues for other ongoing research. In 2012, earned me a Medal for Invention and Scientific Research from H.E. Jakaya Kikwete, President of United Republic of Tanzania. I head the "Vector borne and Zoonotic Disease Studies" section at the Pest Management Centre that is also the African Centre of Excellence (ACE) for Innovative Rodent Pest Management and Biosensor Technology Development, I also lead the APOPO TB detection program in Tanzania. This enriched and diverse working environment with renowned rodentology experts has been key to investigations on diverse application of biosensor technology, including pediatric TB detection by rats. An ambition to unravel disease diagnosis challenges is a driving force to follow this research career. My multidisciplinary backgrounds in veterinary laboratory technology, zoology, and microbiology enable me fulfill this research interest. Our previous proof-of-concept work trained rats to detect TB with co-researchers at APOPO, and evidence that rats detect specific volatile odor compounds triggered interest to specifically look into pediatric TB in 2015. My interest is to look further into other sample types for pediatric TB detection and TB detection in people living with HIV/AIDS. I have received appreciable mentorship in microbiology from Professor Uswege Minga and Professor Robert Machang'u whom I met in early 90s when I joined SUA. Mentorship in rodent systematics from Professor Chimimba and Professor Armanda Bastos of University of Pretoria is memorable. Methorship on tuberculosis from Professor Stefan Kaufmann of Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology, who also supervised my PhD, has been great. Young researchers should be research focused even with little resources could address diverse problems.

**Photo: Dr. Georgies Mgode**

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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