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New Study Reports on Unusual Mania Due to HIV in Uganda, Africa

Arlington, Va. – A new study conducted at two Ugandan hospitals reports on many unusual cases of mania. Of 125 patients with acute mania in a six-month period, about half experienced mania resulting from their HIV infection, presenting with symptoms that are clinically and immunologically distinct from more typical cases of mania. Symptom differences between these patients and HIV-negative patients with primary mania are described in the August 2006 issue of *The American Journal of Psychiatry (AJP)*, the official journal of the American Psychiatric Association (APA).

The findings appear in the article, “Primary Mania Versus HIV-Related Secondary Mania in Uganda” by Etheldreda Nakimuli-Mpungu, M.B.Ch.B., M.Med.(Psych.), and associates, of Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. The authors studied patients in the general psychiatric wards of Mulago and Butabika Hospitals.

Compared to the HIV-negative patients, the patients with HIV-related mania had more manic symptoms: they were more irritable, more aggressive, more talkative and had higher rates of paranoid delusions, visual hallucinations and auditory hallucinations. In addition, patients in this group, who tended to be older and female relative to the other group, were more cognitively impaired, had less education and had a lower socioeconomic status, which could be a factor in the severity of their illnesses, as it can result in less access to health care and delay in treatment.

“The Ugandan psychiatrists’ recognition of many unusual cases of mania, which they then related to the active AIDS illness in their patients, reminds us that the brain is a sensitive indicator of disease,” stated Robert Freedman, M.D., *AJP* editor-in-chief.

The article is accompanied by an editorial by Robert Robinson, M.D., of the University of Iowa.

This study was supported in part by the Uganda Ministry of Health Support to the Health Sector Strategic Plan Project (funded by the African Development Bank), the Makerere University Faculty of Medicine Sida/SAREC project, and an APA/AstraZeneca Young Minds in Psychiatry International Award 2004 to Dr. Nakimuli-Mpungu.

(*Am J Psychiatry*. 2006; 163: 1349-1354).

Note to Editors: Contact APA’s Office of Communications and Public Affairs at 703-907-8640 or press@psych.org for an embargoed copy of the article and editorial.

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