

A **MATRIX** *Minute* with Nyaradzo Mgodzi



About Nyaradzo

Dr. Nyaradzo Mgodzi is a researcher with the [University of Zimbabwe](#) and Harare Health and Research Consortium (HHRC). With more than 16 years of experience in the field of HIV prevention, her roles with MATRIX include Clinical Trials Hub co-lead, protocol co-chair for [MATRIX-002](#) and investigator of record for [MATRIX-002](#) and [MATRIX-003](#).

How did you become interested in the field of HIV prevention and how did you begin your career in the field?

In the 90s I lost family, friends and colleagues to AIDS-related illnesses. In 2007, after having worked in the Zimbabwean Public Health sector for almost 12 years and seeing the relentless morbidity and mortality from HIV/AIDS, I was struck by an urgent need to contribute significantly towards curbing the HIV epidemic. I decided to have a career change; moving from clinical pathology to HIV prevention/treatment research and joining the University of Zimbabwe University of California San Francisco Collaborative Research Program as medical officer for several clinical trials.

What do you think it will take to end the HIV epidemic, and how far away are we from this goal?

I think what it will take is robust political will to invest in a sustainable HIV response, and to address cross-cutting issues of inequality and promote equitable access to affordable and acceptable interventions. We are almost there. Recently we demonstrated that the intra-vaginal dapivirine ring can safely help reduce new HIV infections in women and that long acting injectable cabotegravir reduces the risk of HIV acquisition in cisgender women, transgendered persons and men who have sex with men. I am therefore optimistic that in the next five years the field will scale up these safe and efficacious biomedical HIV prevention tools helping to bridge the existing gap in HIV prevention. We know that an HIV vaccine is the world's best hope of ending HIV. Though there will most likely not be an effective vaccine in the next five years, I think we will continue to make great strides in the development of other innovative products that will contribute towards ending the epidemic.

-more-



What part of your current role in MATRIX do you enjoy the most?

I enjoy all aspects of MATRIX! I enjoy the North-South collaboration and working closely with product developers. I am especially glad that we African scientists are involved in product research and development and that we are part of a team that is searching for lasting, human-centered solutions and developing innovative biomedical interventions.

What advice would you give to someone looking to enter the field of HIV prevention?

I would encourage them to go for it. The work that we do is hard, time-consuming but it is very gratifying. I would not exchange it for anything! It is not just about pecuniary or academic gains but also about self-actualization and the contribution towards improvement of humankind. HIV exerts an especially high toll in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and with the alarming number of new infections each year, time is not on our side. The work that we do brings us closer to our ultimate goal of curbing the pandemic and ensuring an AIDS-free SSA, and of course a world free of AIDS.

What do you think you'd be doing if HIV were non-existent?

I am a pathologist, so I guess I would still be providing clinical pathology services in the public and private health sectors in Zimbabwe.

What is a fun fact about you?

That I am a mathematician. In high school I was a member of the Mathematics Olympiad. I am also mother of a 31 year-old daughter and 26 year old son. It is quite interesting when my daughter is mistaken for my (much younger) sister!

What do you do in your free time?

I'm a workaholic! However, I am an avid reader of fiction and I always make time for a good read. My favorite authors include John Grisham, Jeffrey Archer, and Sidney Sheldon. I am currently reading Jeffrey Archer's "Paths of Glory." I also love gardening, listening to all genres of music and I regularly participate in walkathons.

October 17, 2023

MATRIX

A USAID Project to Advance the Research and Development
of Innovative HIV Prevention Products for Women

MATRIX is made possible by the generous support of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the MATRIX program. The contents in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.