



Welcome to CaSE Connect!

We are delighted to introduce our bi-annual newsletter, **CaSE Connect**! We see CaSE Connect as just one of the ways we hope to remain in touch with our alumni – our former CaSE fellows and scholars – and to keep you informed of future engagement opportunities, events of interest and news and updates about MATRIX and your fellow alumni. In turn, we hope you find the newsletter and our other communication platforms useful for networking and your continued professional development.

MATRIX

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

In this issue:

MATRIX Update

CaSE Spotlight:
Tapiwa Manyarara

CaSE Alumni: In
their own words

Help spread the
word (about CaSE)!

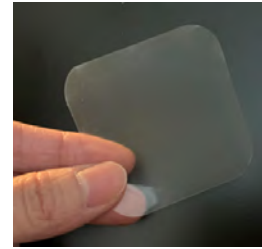
Of Interest

Stay Connected

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funded MATRIX in 2021 as a five-year program focused on expediting the research and development of HIV prevention products for women – including products to protect against both HIV and pregnancy – that in addition to being safe and effective, will be acceptable, affordable, scalable and deliverable in the settings where they are needed most.



MATRIX's current portfolio consists of four products– all in the early stages of development, and all making headway. The [TAF/EVG fast-dissolving vaginal insert](#) – an on-demand product that women would use around the time of sex – is the farthest along. In fact, the [MATRIX-001](#) Phase 1 study, which is the second Phase 1 study of the product and the first to enroll African women, is expected to complete follow-up of its 60 participants, at three sites in Kenya, South Africa and the U.S. before the end of the year. Also by year's end, the [MATRIX-002](#) study evaluating the acceptability and usability of two prototype vaginal films (with no active drug) designed to dissolve over the course of a month, will likely complete enrollment of 100 women at five sites in Kenya, South Africa, the U.S. and Zimbabwe. A similar study, MATRIX-003, which is evaluating two prototype vaginal rings that women would use for a month at a time and is being conducted at many of the same sites, may not be far behind in meeting its enrollment target of 100 participants either. Both the MATRIX-002 and MATRIX-003 studies will help inform the design of the active products to be evaluated in first-in-human Phase 1 clinical trials – a [monthly vaginal film](#) containing the antiretroviral (ARV) drug dapivirine and a [dual-purpose monthly vaginal ring](#) containing a non-ARV and a non-hormonal contraceptive, respectively.



What's next? Among MATRIX's planned studies is [MATRIX-007](#), or CARE-PrEP (Cabotegravir, Oral PrEP and Ring Evaluation in Pregnancy), which aims to contribute important safety data on the use of ARV-based prevention products during pregnancy. The study will enroll participants in the [CATALYST](#) study who become pregnant while using either long-acting cabotegravir injectable (CABLA), the monthly dapivirine ring or daily oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and elect to continue its use during pregnancy. MATRIX-007 will be conducted in Kenya, Lesotho and Zimbabwe in collaboration with Maximizing Options to Advance Informed Choice for HIV Prevention (MOSAIC), a five-year program funded by the U.S. President's Fund for AIDS Relief through USAID, and is expected to be underway at some sites in the coming months.

Tapiwa Manyarara, our first MATRIX CaSE Track 3 Fellow

Meet Tapiwa Manyarara, a pharmaceutical scientist from the University of Zimbabwe, who is our first Track 3 Fellow.

The Track 3 Fellowship, which is focused on the pre-formulation, formulation and scale-up phases of product development, is intended for those with a keen interest in growing and gaining the skills and capacity to lead and inform the development of HIV prevention and dual prevention biomedical products on the African continent. A unique feature of the fellowship is the guided mentorship provided by experts based in both the Global North and Global South. Tapiwa's experience and interests are in formulation technology, nanomedicine and product development. He holds a Bachelor of Pharmacy (Hons) degree and an MPhil. in Pharmaceutics, Pharmacology and Nanomedicine from the University of Zimbabwe, where, since 2022, he's been a Junior Lecturer in the Department of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences teaching pharmaceutics.



His fellowship began in January of 2024, and he's already completed three months of training and hands-on laboratory work in pre-formulation at the North-West University's Centre of Excellence for Pharmaceutical Sciences (PharmaCen) in South Africa. Since April he's been working with researchers at [Magee-Womens Research Institute](#) at the University of Pittsburgh, in the United States, where he will stay until December. He will then complete up to 12-months of supervised training at North-West University, before returning to his home institution. Tapiwa aspires to leverage his skill set, collaborations, and shared experiences to promote HIV prevention, pharmaceutical research, product development, manufacturing, and other product innovations for Africa.

Learn more about Tapiwa by reading his interview in A MATRIX Minute [HERE](#)

“Looking back on my CaSE Fellowship journey, I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to have been part of a vibrant community of scholars and practitioners dedicated to advancing drug discovery and improving global health outcomes. From fundamental principles to specialized topics like pharmacokinetics and various aspects of clinical trials, the fellowship provided me with invaluable insights and practical skills. Collaborating with diverse peers enriched my learning and reinforced the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration. The knowledge, skills, and insights gained through this transformative experience will undoubtedly shape my future endeavors in the field of biomedical research, empowering me to make meaningful contributions to society.”



– Mercy Akinyi
Research Officer, Kenya Medical Research Institute - Centre for Virus Research
Track 1 Drug Development Course



“My experience being part of the D2D-Pillar 1 team has expanded my knowledge and creativity in conducting research. I have a new appreciation of study participants as collaborators in research and the important role they play in meeting the objectives of any study. Post course, I continue to work with the D2D team to understand end-user acceptability and preferences. I have had the opportunity to share my learnings through a blog, a style of writing that I was not familiar with before. I would highly recommend this program to anyone and guarantee that it will broaden their critical thinking skills and their perspective on research.”

– Njeri Wairimu
Social scientist, Kenya Medical Research Institute, Thika Project
Track 2 D2D-Pillar 1

Read Njeri's first-person account which was featured in MATRIX Matters [HERE](#)

We are very proud of our alumni, and we want to stay connected! We would love to hear from you and learn what you've achieved, how your career has progressed and what you've been doing since completing a MATRIX program. If you are interested in being featured in CaSE Connect or have an idea for a story, please reach out to matrixcaseconnect@lists.matrix4prevention.org

Help spread the word (about CaSE)!

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One of MATRIX's most important aims is to help realize and strengthen the research and development capacity of African investigators, and it's through its Capacity Strengthening, Engagement and Mentorship (**CaSE**) hub, and more specifically, the CaSE Fellowships Program, that MATRIX is seeking to make a difference in the lives and futures of mid-level career scientists and researchers. If you're reading this newsletter, chances are you've already taken part in one of our fellowships or learning programs, so we hope you will help spread the word about the different kinds of opportunities MATRIX has to offer for learning about early research and development from HIV-prevention experts in both the Global North and Global South!



For those interested in the business side of things, there's the opportunity to work with our partners in the Business, Market Dynamics and Commercialization (**BACH**) hub and learn more about and contribute to efforts supporting MATRIX's product developers to optimize their product's potential affordability, scalability and deliverability. If social and behavioral research is your passion, consider the kind of experience and skills to be gained working as part of the Design to Delivery (**D2D**) hub, which is focused on understanding and being responsive to feedback of end-users, health care providers and other stakeholders and the insight they can provide into the uptake, rollout and acceptability of different HIV prevention options during the earliest stages of product development. If it's the actual process of early research and development that is of greatest interest, imagine spending a year or more working side-by-side and learning from the leading researchers and product developers in sub-Saharan Africa and the U.S. If it's simply an online learning course you are seeking, look no further than MATRIX's e-learning opportunities.

Be on the lookout for announcements for applications for these and other opportunities, expected in the coming months, and be sure to tell your friends! Consider applying yourself!

All our new fellowships, programs and course applications will start opening from January 2025
Subscribe to CaSE CONNECT, to receive updates so you have early access to apply and spread the word!
Link to subscribe: <https://forms.office.com/r/uG32cmlfnZ>



Coming Up

2024 MATRIX Investigators Meeting

Hosted by: MATRIX
August 26-30, Nairobi, Kenya

5th HIV Research for Prevention Conference (HIV R4P 2024)

Hosted by: International AIDS Society
October 6-10, 2024, Lima, Peru, and virtual
Learn more: <https://www.iasociety.org/conferences/hivr4p2024>

20th International Congress on Infectious Diseases (ICID)

Hosted by: International Society for infectious Diseases (ICID)
December 3-6, 2024, Cape Town, South Africa
Learn more: <https://isid.org/icid2024/>

3th IAS Conference on HIV Science

Hosted by: International AIDS Society
July 14-17, 2025, Kigali, Rwanda



Thought you missed it?

Building a Brand for PrEP: Positioning PrEP in the Hearts and Minds of Young People

Hosted by: MOSAIC Global PrEP Learning Network
In this webinar, we heard from teams working to change the landscape of PrEP marketing by applying private sector approaches to brand the PrEP category. This webinar held on 14 March 2024
Link to recording <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P16oCpK1rYg>

STIs: Global trends and prevention interventions

Hosted by: The Journal of the International AIDS Society
Updates on the latest global STIs trends, the state of Doxy post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), DoxyPEP and women, vaccines for gonorrhea, and the citywide impact of DoxyPEP rollout, using San Francisco as an example. This webinar held on 7 May 2024
Link to recording <https://plus.iasociety.org/webcasts/stis-global-trends-and-prevention-interventions>

CaSE Alumni Network

Who should join?

- You are currently enrolled in a course
- You have completed a course
- You are part of the CaSE team

Click [here](#) to sign up



CaSE on WhatsApp

Why WhatsApp?

- Event updates
- Virtual engagements reminders
- Networking opportunities
- Course Study Groups
- Alumni Group

Click [here](#) to sign up

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MATRIX website at <https://www.matrix4prevention.org/>

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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 authors 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.

