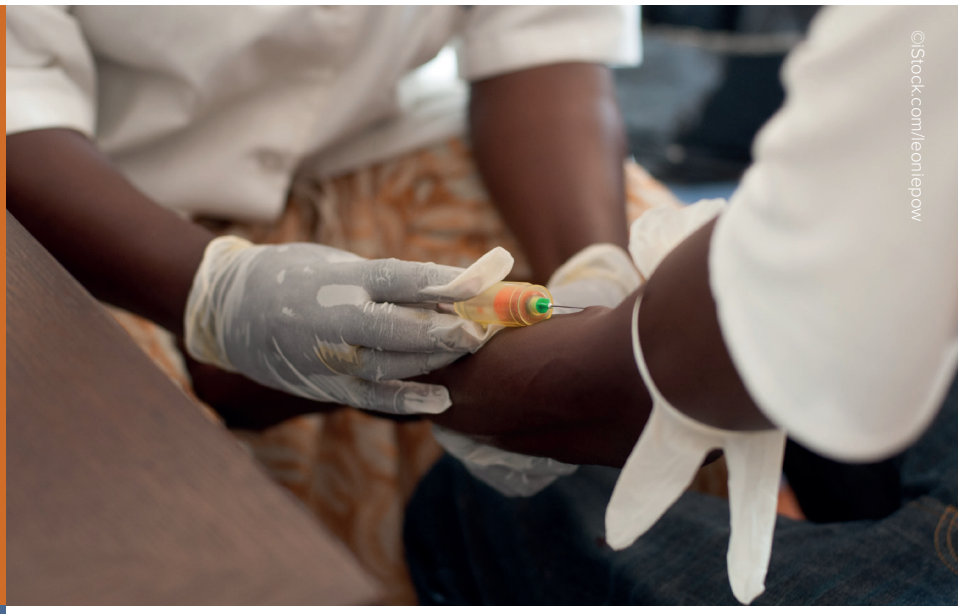
DiaDev

Investigating Diagnostics in Global Health

MAPPING DIAGNOSTIC DEVICES IN SIERRA LEONE:

a qualitative study



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This study is part of a European Research Council funded project looking at the design and use of diagnostic devices in global health. It explores the role of diagnostic devices that are designed for use in places with limited laboratory infrastructure, in the transformation of health systems in resource-limited settings. In Sierra Leone, the study is focused on the challenges and opportunities presented by diagnostic devices during the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak of 2014, its aftermath and in current preparedness planning.

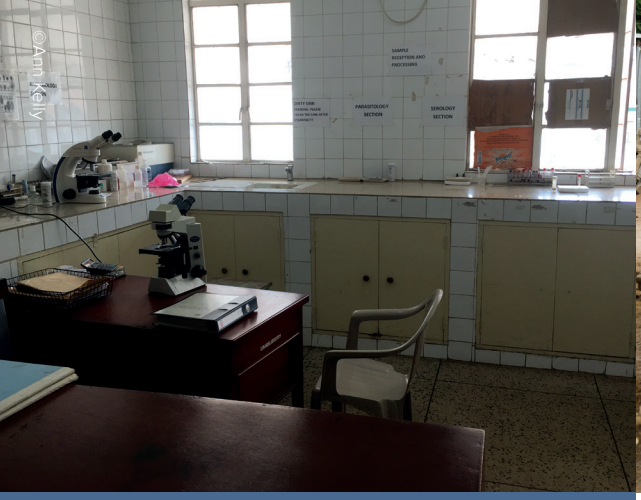
The study is coordinated by the University of Edinburgh in collaboration with Kings College London and Kings Health Partners.

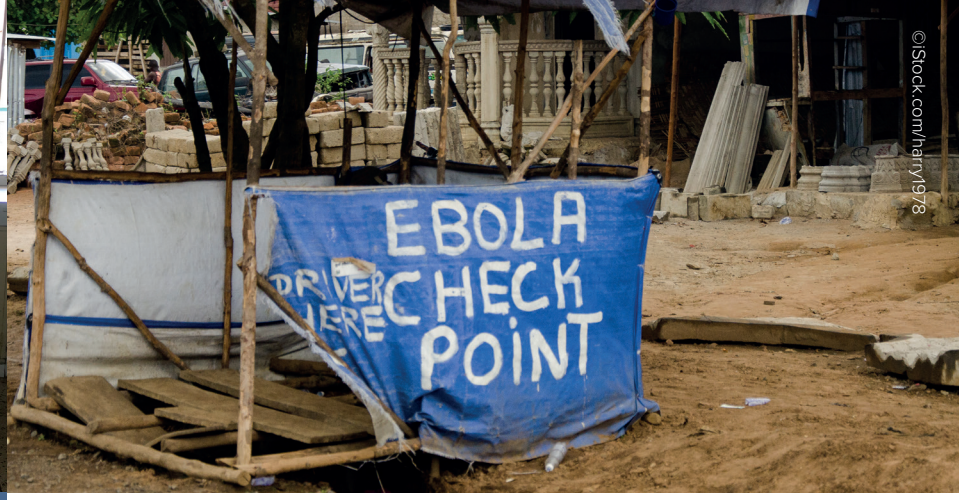
OBJECTIVES

- To develop a transferable qualitative toolkit to map the strengths and weaknesses of existing diagnostic networks.
- To identify lessons learned from the role that diagnostic tools played in the 2014 EBV outbreak.
- To provide a situation analysis of current diagnostic systems for EBV and other emerging public health problems in Sierra Leone, and to identify priority areas for action.
- To better understand interactions between diagnostic devices and other elements of the health system to support health system strengthening.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What sites, resources and diagnostic practices comprise the current diagnostic infrastructure for emerging public health problems in Sierra Leone, and how might we map relationships and flows between clinical and laboratory services?
- How did the EBV outbreak transform the national diagnostic infrastructure, and what role are diagnostics playing in current preparedness efforts?
- What do those who work in or use the Sierra Leone health system perceive to be the priorities for health system strengthening, and what role, if any, do diagnostic tools play in this?





THE RESEARCHERS

Principal Investigator
Dr. Alice Street

Dr. Alice Street is a Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Street is a medical anthropologist, whose research has focuses on health systems strengthening, health management and the social life of mobile medical devices in global health.

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Collaborating Investigator
Dr. Ann Kelly

Dr. Ann Kelly is a Senior Lecturer in Global Health and Deputy Director of the Global Health Institute at Kings College London. Dr. Kelly is a medical anthropologist, whose research has focused on public health interventions and disease control efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on the integration of experimental research with health care infrastructures.

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METHODS

- Develop a qualitative toolkit to enable rapid mapping of national diagnostic infrastructure, and the flows of information, samples, personnel and resources between clinical and laboratory services. Pilot diagnostic mapping tool, with a focus on EBV, malaria and other emerging public health problems.
- Ethnographic research with health workers in order to document routine diagnosis and treatment practices in relation to medical supply systems, health information systems, central laboratories, and quality assurance systems.
- Interviews with health workers, health managers and patients around their experiences and perceptions of diagnostic devices during and since the 2014 EBV outbreak.
- Interviews with diagnostic developers, public bodies, donors, and scientists involved in the development of diagnostic tools for EBV.

COLLABORATION

This project has a collaborative research design. Over the course of the project we will work closely with stakeholders in the Sierra Leone health system and global health field to refine and adapt the project design, solicit feedback on findings, and develop innovative solutions.

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