



Conference Call Minutes

Monday July 27th, 2020

3:00 - 4:00pm EDT

Phone: +1 (669) 224-3412 Access Code: 863-484-245

Slides: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/863484245>

Attendees: If we missed or misspelled your name, please let us know!

Chari Cohen (Hepatitis B Foundation), Nadine Kela-Murphy (NYC Department of Health), Dr. Leso Munala (St. Catherine University), Jane Pan (HBI-DC), Beatrice Zovich (Hepatitis B Foundation), Farma Pene (NYC Department of Health), Augustus Woyah (Maryland Department of Health), Maureen Kamischke (Hepatitis B Foundation), Michaela Jackson (Hepatitis B Foundation), Elizabeth Koch (Columbus DOH), Chioma Nnaji (NAIRHHA Day), Bright Ansah (HBF), Halimatou Konte (African Services Committee), Victoria Foster (NYC DOH)

3:00 pm Welcome & Introductions

It is very nice to meet all of you and I look forward to being the administrator for this coalition and learning more about hepatitis elimination and health promotion in the African immigrant community.

For any questions or concerns, feel free to get in touch:
beatrice.zovich@hepb.org

3:15 pm Presentation: Sexual Cleansing as an Act of Violence Against Widows. Leso Munala,

PhD, (lmunala@stkate.edu), St. Catherine University, St. Paul, Minnesota

- Emphasis on changing Kenyan laws and recognizing cleansing as sexual violence, even though it is a cultural practice
- Taking cues from changes that have been made to practices like female genital cutting (FGC) that are still culturally acceptable, such as speaking to girls about womanhood, rather than engaging in FGC
- Widows were all in the same county and were recruited through a cooperative that helps widows build financial self-sufficiency.
- Key differences found between older and younger women were that older widows reported that their sexual cleansing would occur just four days after their husband's burial and that their cleanser would become their inheritor. For younger women, a professional cleanser was employed and these men would not typically inherit them.
- Additionally, in older generations, there was a lot of pressure from in-laws and women's own families to undergo the practice of sexual cleansing as a duty. For younger women, the practice of inheriting is largely for women who are unable or unwilling to move to bigger cities to support themselves and their children, and to give up their land and their homes.
- Punishments for refusal to participate in sexual cleansing frequently included ostracization and property theft. There is also a belief that a first-born son will die within a year if the practice is not undertaken.

- *What have other countries, such as Zambia, done to devise a culturally acceptable practice to dispel bad omens that does not involve rape?* It is crucial that alternative practices come from the community. They can involve something similar to harvesting rituals, for example.
- *What happens to widowers in this community?* They are able to remarry, no cleansing ritual is needed, and they don't have to worry about their first-born son dying.
- In the next stage of the project, male investigators will work to understand the male perspective on this issue in this community.
- One very positive takeaway was that there was a great deal of empowerment among the women interviewees, as they were able to share their thoughts and feelings on this practice with each other for the first time.

3:45 pm **World Hepatitis Day/Member Updates**

- The Global Liver Institute will host GLI LIVE on July 28th at 12:30pm-1pm EDT on the Global Liver Institute Facebook Page.
- Hep B United and the Hepatitis B Foundation will have a #ThrowbackWHD Twitter storm all day July 28th, World Hepatitis Day! Partners and hepatitis B advocates are encouraged to share memories from past in-person Hep B United Summits and Advocacy Days. Share your memories, pics, and videos with the hashtags: #ThrowbackWHD, #WorldHepatitisDay, and #HepBUnited.
- Hep Free Hawaii is hosting a virtual launch of the state's first Hepatitis Elimination Strategy on July 28th at 6pm EDT. More information can be found [here](#).
- RWJ Barnabas Health Medical Centers are offering free hepatitis screenings. More info [here](#).
- HepFree NYC is hosting a webinar on July 28th at 1pm EDT that will discuss screening guidelines and offer patient testimony. More info and registration can be found [here](#).
- Dr. Robert Gish will be conducting a webinar: Laboratory Testing for Viral Hepatitis: What's New and What's Changed? on July 28th at 12pm EDT. Register [here](#).
- HBI-DC is using a hybrid model of screening using online registration and blood drawn at one of the LabCorp Patient Service Centers, which are open for people do not have any COVID-19 symptoms.
- HBI-DC will be posting a video on Finding the Missing Millions for World Hepatitis Day!
- NYC CHIPO Quarterly meeting will be 7/29, 3-5pm EDT.
- Save the Date! The Hep B United Summit will be entirely online this year and will occur from December 2nd-4th, 2020. Registration will open in October. Stay tuned for more details!

4:00 pm **Conclusion**

Thanks so much for joining! Please keep us updated about research and programmatic updates and let us know if you'd like to present at the next meeting!

Next Coalition Call:

Monday September 21st, 2020 3:00 - 4:00 PM EDT

Slides: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/241018653>

United States: +1 (872) 240-3311; Access Code: 241-018-653
(If calling internationally, use computer audio.)