

# Bwenzi La Thanzi (BLT)

Nearly 250 million people worldwide have schistosomiasis, a neglected tropical infection caused by *Schistosoma* parasites. People become infected with schistosomiasis by walking or swimming in contaminated water sources when they farm, fish or bathe. Schistosomiasis can damage the reproductive tract, due to the millions of eggs deposited by the parasites over time. Some data suggest that women with schistosomiasis may have increased risk of experiencing HIV and infertility, compared to women without schistosomiasis. However, these links have not been clearly established.



The *Bwenzi La Thanzi* study is enrolling 200 women who come for care at McGuire Wellness Center with reproductive system complaints. BLT employs 3 full-time and one part-time study staff members.

## Purpose

- The BLT study will determine the prevalence of schistosomiasis, HIV and infertility among women who come to McGuire Wellness Center for care.
  - Each week, ~ 25% of women who come for care at the McGuire Wellness Center have reproductive system complaints, but the specific infections causing these complaints have not been measured before now.
- During the physical examination, we also examine women for signs of cervical cancer and test for other infections.
- The BLT study is expanding on-site laboratory and diagnostic capacity at McGuire Wellness Center, which improves care of patients and research participants.

## Methods

- Enrollment began in January 2015
- 52 women have enrolled as of 4 March 2015

## Results

- So far, 7% of women have schistosomiasis, and 7% have HIV
- More than 50% have other reproductive or sexually transmitted infections, including urinary tract infections, gonorrhea and trichomoniasis
- Data collection and laboratory testing will continue through August 2015.
- The final results will be used to develop an intervention to screen and treat women for this common parasitic infection, to reduce the associated burden of disease and to improve women's reproductive health.



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