**Graduate Research Symposium - Proposal Submission**

**Title** – School Children’s Knowledge and Perceptions of Ebola Virus Disease in Uganda

**Program of Study** – Health Education and Health Promotion

**Presentation Type** – Choose one of the following: PowerPoint

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**Category** – Choose one of the following: Experimental (Applied)

**Abstract**

**Background:**
The last outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in Uganda was reported on 23 November 2012, with a total of 10 reported cases, 6 confirmed, and 4 probable. Of these 10 cases 4 died. According to CDC Uganda has had 5 Ebola classified outbreaks that fortunately have been well contained. The public knowledge of EVD is important for prevention of disease, yet the level of public knowledge, perception and accuracy of information on EVD were unknown. This study aimed to evaluate knowledge of EVD risk factors, common warning signs, and preventive practices among lower secondary school students in a rural and urban schools in Busoga, Uganda.

**Methods:**
In this school-based cross sectional study, a total of 147 Senior 1 students completed a qualitative and quantitative survey. It was self-administered short survey collecting data on socio-demographic characteristics, EVD–related knowledge, perception and intended practices in case of an outbreak. We performed descriptive statistics in SPSS version 20.1 to analyze the data.

**Results:**
The majority of participants were between 10 to 17 years of age. The majority (87.1%) had heard about EVD and 19.7% of the participants believe that they are at great risk of getting Ebola. Regarding knowledge, 59.9% stated that EVD was airborne, and 16.3% thought it could be transmitted through mosquito bites. Majority (66.0%) stated that EVD can be transmitted through body fluids of a sick person, and 46.9 % stated that EVD can be treated with a vaccine. For preventive behaviors 10.9% stated that they could protect themselves from EVD by washing their hands with salt, 21.1% by washing hands with hot water, 53.1% avoiding contact with blood and body fluids of a sick person, and 37.4% by avoiding a funeral. For symptoms of EVD, 6.1% mentioned fever, 19.7% diarrhea, and 26.5% vomiting. Majority (39.5%) stated they
would not buy from a shopkeeper who had contracted Ebola but had recovered and declared well.

**Conclusions:**
Study results reflect large gaps in student’s EVD-related knowledge and perceptions. Public health EVD prevention message targeting school children and youth are urgently needed to increase students’ knowledge levels, correct misconception and discourage stigmatization and practices that might increase the risk of contracting the disease.

**Christian Worldview**

Ebola is one of the most recent public health concern. Due to the rapid and feasible propagation of the disease, population around the world is in need of necessary information to protect themselves. The world population needs knowledge about ways that Ebola can be transmitted, the symptoms of Ebola and more specifically ways to prevent themselves from acquiring Ebola. As an ambassador for Christ, Christians have the responsibility to take part in instructing others about ways to keep their body healthy. The body represents God’s temple. The work of Christians is not only constituted of providing instruction on spiritual growth, but also in participating on environmental efforts to eradicate diseases.

After creating heaven and earth, God places human on earth to be the steward of the earth. As follower of Christ, Christians have the duty to do research on issues that make the earth an unreliable place to live. Ebola is one of the diseases that threaten human’s lives. Measures need to be taken to detect additional ways to prevent the propagation of Ebola. The best method to increase knowledge about the disease is research. Result of the research can serve as a parameter to the implementation of new measures to eradicate the disease. Research will be able to indicate the personal efforts that everyone can take to protect themselves and their communities from Ebola. Efforts should be taken to increase awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills about ways to eradicate the disease. With the help of research, Ebola prevention programs will be able to design in way to respond to the need of specific community. Community efforts with Christian leaders can help to provide others with a healthy life while making disciples for Christ.