

# Economics-Epidemiology Collaboration

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# Overview

- **Why collaborate?**
- **Examples from my work**
- **Funding & timing**
- **Challenges**
- **Useful practices**

# Why collaborate?

- Regardless of timing - amplify impact of epidemiologic study
  - **Descriptive & interventional**
- ***If prospective:***
- Influence epidemiologic design as member of team
- Fully explore and refine economic question(s)
- Better measurement of:
  - **costs - for program (concurrent costing, time and motion) and household (interviews)**
  - **health events and associated medical utilization**
- Accelerate economics results

# Collaboration examples from my work

- **PETRA PMTCT studies, via UNAIDS (coordinating unit)**
- **Tororo HBAC (Home-Based AIDS Care), with CDC Kenya**
- **Community Integrated Prevention Campaign, with Vestergaard Frandsen & Kenya partners**
- **SEARCH and related studies of ART expansion in Uganda and Kenya, with UCSF AIDS Program**
- **HOPE – keeping IDUs in ART care (U.S.), NIDA-funded research, U. of Miami**

# Funding and timing of economics portion

- **Part of original award:** more timely, can strengthen initial proposal, *but* often limited amount, may be questioned prior to efficacy data.
- **Supplement to original award:** Can occur once efficacy known, larger amount, *but* missed chance for parallel data collection.
- **Separate flexible economics funding:** wonderful if possible.

# Challenges

- Education on economics
  - terms & concepts (eg economic vs financial, time and motion, sensitivity analyses, utilization vs price, ICERs),
  - methods (eg survey approaches, forest / trees)
- Education on epidemiology
  - My perspective as MD/epidemiologist is atypical ... health economists might require more assistance on epidemiology
- Occasional temptation to:
  - treat **preliminary** favorable results (which may have order-of-magnitude errors) as meaningful
  - treat high (unattractive) final ICERs as inconsequential

# Useful collaboration practices

- **Participate** in protocol & operational manual development, and work with data & statistics teams.
- Lots of team and economics **meetings**, and joint **travel** to the field.
- Hire **dedicated economics RA(s)**, on site and at home (within constraints) – for expertise and focus.
- Specify **reasonable expectations** & priorities given available resources.
- Repeatedly **describe and illustrate** economics ... develop **facility to clearly explain** key concepts, methods, and results(oral and written)

# Products

- Presentations at team meetings
- Abstracts & talks at professional meetings
- **Papers** – nothing compares for formality, comprehensiveness, shared ownership, finality. Collective scrutiny of methods, findings, conclusions. Creation of common voice. Sometimes intense process, always excellent resolution and product.



# Contact

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