I recently travelled with colleagues from Cambridge to the THRiVE AGM in Kampala. We co-supervise a postgraduate student, Richard, at Makerere University in Uganda, so this was a really good opportunity to meet him and also learn about the wider research activities of the students sponsored by THRiVE.

I really enjoyed the THRiVE conference. I was really impressed by the quality of the research and the high calibre of the students at the conference. It was fascinating to be taken out of one's own comfort zone for a few days (in my case, severe asthma) and learn about research projects ranging from meningitis to mosquito control. Furthermore, it really helped me to understand the geographical context in which Richard is working. I absorbed a lot about the organisation of health care in the country, and now understand better some of the hurdles researchers have to jump in a resource-limited country.

The THRiVE team are very inclusive, and I ended up taking part in some of the end of year student assessments, which were rigorous.

I also managed to foster some links with the respiratory physicians at Makerere Institute of Respiratory Medicine, and we are now making plans for future collaborations.

Supervision by Skype is useful, but to meet Richard and his co-supervisors in person has proven invaluable in improving the dialogue among us all and the quality of supervision I am able to provide.

If you are considering mentoring a student in East Africa, I’d thoroughly recommend it. You'll learn a lot about another country and the health care there, and get to meet some very interesting people. If you are mentoring already but haven't been to a THRiVE AGM, do strongly consider it. The budget does include money to one mentor visit to the student’s place of study.

Visiting the THRiVE AGM was inspirational: Resources are limited, but ambition and a determination to improve lives are not.

Furthermore, it was fun!

Robin Gore

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