



# The PAACS Bulletin

Monthly Newsletter • Issue 245 • December 2024



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# PAACS

PAN-AFRICAN ACADEMY  
OF CHRISTIAN SURGEONS

## PAACS MISSION

*PAACS' mission is to glorify God by training and discipling African surgeons and related specialists to become Christ-like leaders and servants providing excellent and compassionate care to those most in need.*

## PAACS VISION

*PAACS envisions a growing number of African surgeons and related specialists living out the Gospel and ministering to the sick.*

# FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO



Dear PAACS Family,

*Susan Koshy, JD, MPH  
Chief Executive Officer*

As we celebrated the birth of Jesus this Christmas, I was reminded of the hope and peace He brings to our world. Romans 15:13 captures this beautifully: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." We are grateful for God's gift of salvation through Jesus and the privilege of sharing His love through the ministry of PAACS.

With this being the last month of the year, December has been busy for PAACS. I was able to meet with several PAACS supporters, partners, and foundation leaders. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to get to know these individuals and organizations, their work, and their interest in our ministry. We are especially thankful that PAACS was the recipient of two grants from two separate foundations this month. This will go a long way in helping us to train and disciple the 50 new residents who will be joining PAACS in January 2025.

December is also a month of celebration, as we rejoice in the accomplishments of our residents at the COSECSA examinations. On December 2nd and 3rd, PAACS candidates took their exams in Harare, Zimbabwe and 27 out of 29 successfully passed them. In November, 25 residents passed their MCS oral exams via Zoom with a 100% success rate. We thank God for the success of these residents.

In addition to all of this, we celebrate the graduation of approximately 30 residents who are completing their training. We are excited to see how God uses them to touch many lives across Africa. As you will read in this issue, among these graduates are two residents from Malamulo Adventist Hospital, the first Malawians to be trained and disciplined by PAACS in their own country—a significant milestone that we believe will open doors for many more to follow.

Thank you for your prayers and support. You are an essential part of this mission, and we couldn't do this without you. From all of us at PAACS, we hope you had a joyful Christmas and wish you a blessed New Year!

Blessings,

Susan A. Koshy, JD, MPH  
Chief Executive Officer  
PAACS



# COSECSA EXAMS AND GRADUATION

*Keir Thelander, MD, FACS, FWACS, FCS (ECSA)  
Executive Vice President*



Congratulations to the 27 PAACS residents and fellows who successfully passed their COSECSA exams in Harare, Zimbabwe, December 2nd and 3rd, 2024. PAACS candidates were successful in General Surgery (16), Orthopaedics (6), Cardiothoracic Surgery (2), Pediatric Surgery (2), and Neurosurgery (1). Overall PAACS graduates represented 19.6% of the 138 total COSECSA graduates. Over 15 PAACS faculty members participated. PAACS EVP, Keir Thelander, accepted the invitation to be the external examiner for the General Surgery examination process, while he also represents PAACS on the Examination and Credentialing Committee of COSECSA. Tim Love represents PAACS on the Education, Scientific, and Research Committee (ESRC). Notably, as COSECSA strengthens its research position, the ESRC separated into two committees, the Education and Scientific Committee and the Research Committee. Keeping with tradition a PAACS' celebration dinner took place Tuesday, December 3, 2024, attended by around 80 PAACS' current grads, previous grads, faculty, and friends.

Wednesday's graduation ceremony marked another year of PAACS graduates receiving top awards when Dr. Violet Otoki (Tenwek) received the award for the highest score in General Surgery and Dr. Yonas Ademe (Tenwek) in Cardiothoracic Surgery. The ceremony was well attended and quite celebratory on this 25th year of COSECSA. Special congratulations to Dr. Otoki and Dr. Ademe on these significant accomplishments.



*Drs. John Tarpley, Violet Otoki (Tenwek-GS), and Keir Thelander.*



*Drs. Yves Yankunze (Tenwek-GS), Gallina Kazobinka (COSECSA Burundi Representative), and Jason Fader (Kibuye - Faculty).*



*Dr. Emmanuel Ikwutah (Galmi-GS)*

For the MCS exams, the oral exams took place by zoom in November, being overseen by PAACS graduate Dr. Ivan Seno. PAACS strong showing resulted in all 25 (15.5% of total) MCS candidates successful completion of 161 overall COSECSA candidates, demonstrating a total passage rate of 83.2% to PAACS candidates 100% success. Another congratulations to these 25 trainees! PAACS residents and graduates strong showings are a testament to the quality of PAACS trainees in knowledge, critical thinking, and spiritual soundness.

**We thank God for His provision. May His glory shine in and through these new surgeons. Please pray for them as they begin their surgical careers, serving those most in need!**



## NKHOMA SURGICAL DEPARTMENT ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2024

*Yamikani Limbe, MD*  
*Assistant Program Director*



### 1. New Surgical Residents

Two new female surgical residents, both from Malawi, were recruited this year.

During the recruitment process, over five candidates were eligible for the position, including two applicants from Mozambique. This highlights the increasing visibility and reputation of our surgical program, attracting attention from neighbouring countries and gender balance in our program.

### 2. Visiting Senior Resident

We are pleased to welcome Dr. James from Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre PAACS Program, who joined us for a three-month senior rotation. Dr. James brings valuable experience and expertise which has positively impacted the growth of our residents.



### 3. Resident Training and Development

Dr. Caleb, one of our senior residents, completed his rotation at Tenwek Hospital in Kenya, focusing on intensive care unit (ICU) training. His skills are already evident as our ICU, which opened only a year ago, is now successfully managing critically ill patients.

Dr. Vitu is currently undergoing the same training at Tenwek Hospital, further enhancing our department's capability in critical care.

### 4. Examination Success and Recognition

Dr. Wongani Mumba, our second-year surgical resident, achieved the highest mark in this year's COSECSA Membership written exam. This accomplishment positions him to receive the Gerald O'Sullivan medal, awarded to the top of the class of the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) grant for an educational visit to a hospital in the United Kingdom providing significant exposure and learning opportunities.



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## NKHOMA SURGICAL DEPARTMENT ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2024

*Yamikani Limbe, MD*  
*Assistant Program Director*

### 5. Endoscopy and Urology Camps

In July, we successfully conducted an Endoscopy Camp led by Dr. Egbert-Jan van der Wouden from Holland and a Urology Camp led by Dr. Smith from the USA. The endoscopy camp enhanced our skills, enabling us to manage gastric varices using glue treatment—an innovative technique now offered for the first time in Malawi.

The urology camp introduced transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP), an essential procedure for our growing number of urology patients, marking a significant advancement in patient care.



### 6. Spiritual Retreat

In September, we held a successful spiritual retreat atop Nkhoma Mountain, attended by staff and their families. Pastor Robert Yanduya from Blantyre Evangelical Bible College led the retreat, fostering spiritual growth and community within our team.



### 7. Personal Achievement

I had the privilege of visiting Chicago and North Carolina, USA, this summer, where I attended the PAACS Annual Conference and the Medical Benevolence Foundation (MBF) Board Meeting as a guest speaker.



### 8. Maternity Theatre Opening

We are proud to announce the opening of the Maternity Theatre, which has alleviated pressure on our main theatres, allowing us to schedule more surgical cases and improve patient care. This development is a significant step forward in optimizing our theatre utilization, especially with the high demand for emergency Caesarean sections.

**These accomplishments reflect the dedication, growth, and impact of our surgical department this year, with continued efforts to improve patient care and training opportunities.**



## MALAMULO PAACS GRADS 2024

*Brent Sherwin, MD*  
*Program Director*



Malamulo PAACS Program celebrated our graduation weekend on December 7 and 8 for our 4th graduating class: Admire Munjeri (Zimbabwe), Gracious Sankhulani (Malawi), and Rumbidzai Mlewah (Malawi). This was a special graduation because it was the first time in PAACS history that Malawian graduates had graduated from a Malawian PAACS training program.

On Saturday evening we had a heartfelt program hearing from several of the hospital staff, residents, and family members about how God had helped the graduates along their journeys. The following day our three graduates received their specialization certificates. We were privileged to have two very special visitors come for the graduation: Dr. Moses Kasumba the former program director and Dr. Ronald Cheney who has been coming to Malamulo on a yearly basis over the past 5 years. The graduation was a great testament to what God has done in the lives of the graduates and we give Him all the praise!



# WHY RESEARCH? PART II

*John Tarpley, MD  
Academic Dean*



# CONFERENCES

The Fall PAACS Conference of October 2024 featured three presentations related to research and the importance of research to PAACS, its faculty, and trainees as we seek to practice and provide quality and safe care in Christ's name. Adrian Park, former PAACS Board Chair and the current Chair of the reinvigorated PAACS Research Committee presented on "PAACS' Excellence in Research - a Natural Evolution." As Dr. Park often states, "We are not talking about killing rats and measuring cytokines." Rather, we are seeking to abet the critical analysis skills of our PAACS faculty and trainees to contribute to quality improvement in our various institutions and better understand the literature. Kat Chu, a colorectal surgeon and Director, Centre for Global Surgery and Professor of Global Surgery, Stellenbosch University in South Africa, presented her thoughts on the importance and potential of PAACS physicians making meaningful contributions to improving quality care on the continent by collaborating in multi-institutional studies across PAACS programs and countries. Her answer to "Why PAACS Research" centered on: "Improve patient care in Africa; improve surgical training; strengthen the relationship between PAACS hospitals; and be a leader in COSECSA." Dr. Robert Parker of Tenwek addressed the "Why": "To improve care for our patients and community; to understand the burden of disease in our setting; to develop problem solving skills; to share our experience with others who could benefit."

As to the concern re: "mission drift," the revised PAACS Strategic Initiative #4 stipulated a research program infrastructure project be developed and presented at this board meeting. The implementation of the proposal was to address the initial proposed tactics of this initiative:

- Develop a workgroup with members who are experienced in research, public health, and data analysis to measure the impact of PAACS programs.
- Create methods and instruments to measure the surgical impact of PAACS programs.
- Create methods and instruments to measure the spiritual impact of PAACS programs.
- Establish databases.
- Establish PAACS surgical registries for various procedures / conditions.
- Conduct studies.
- Publish data.

Many faculty and residents at some PAACS training sites do currently publish and present on topics of importance to our environment and region.\* Just this week Kibuye Hope Hospital, Burundi colleagues (Alliance Niyukuri, Jason Fader, et al.) published a paper entitled "Financial Impact and Healthcare Expenditures Among Surgical Patients in Burundi."

**Continued on next page...**



\*Note: Publications by PAACS-related authors are available [HERE](#)





# CONFERENCES



The College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) and the West African College of Surgeons (WACS) are our partners in education and research to lead in improving health care delivery regionally. Research is expected and encouraged by both Colleges. PAACS aspires to lead, not follow, as we seek to improve access to safe, quality, and affordable care.

PAACS trainees, alumni, and faculty were active in leading and presenting at the COSECSA December 2024 Silver Jubilee meeting just concluded in Harare. COSECSA upgraded its Research Committee to an independent status. See Dr. Thelander's column in this issue of the PAACS Bulletin. PAACS alumnus Michael Mwachiro, a COSECSA Executive Committee member and former Tenwek faculty, is Education Specialist and Research Chair. PAACS Executive Vice President Keir Thelander served as External Examiner for the General Surgery Exams and presented one of the opening session plenary talks on "COSECSA AND PAACS--20+ years of collaboration."

Other presenters at the COSECSA 2024 Annual Meeting included:

- **Barnabas Alayande**, University of Global Health Equity in Rwanda and a PAACS member, presented thrice: "Propelling the Future of Surgical Care in Africa through Innovative delivery of a district-bases junior surgical clerkship for undergraduate medical students in Rwanda: a mixed-methods review of a novel approach; "Safe Surgery Organizational Readiness: Optimizing Primary Health Centers in Nigeria for Surgical Care with an Eye on the Future"; and "Readiness for Future District Hospital Surgical Practice: Perceptions of Recent Graduates Versus District Hospital Surgical Providers."
- **Jason Fader**, Kibuye Hope Hospital, Burundi: "Invigorating the District Hospital in Order to Achieve Universal Health Coverage."
- **Violet Otoki**, General Surgery Resident, Tenwek, Kenya: "Comparing Laparoscopic and Open Appendectomy: Infections and Costs" and "Feasibility of Machine Learning Models for Critical Care Outcomes in Rural Kenya."
- **Mercy Mitei**, General Surgery Resident, Tenwek, Kenya: "Perceptions of Gender Discrimination Among Surgical Trainees."
- **Chelsea Shikuku**, Paediatric Orthopaedic Fellow, Kijabe, Kenya and Addis, Ethiopia: "Host-Perceived Impact of Unidirectional Short-Term Global Surgery Engagements: A Survey of Trainees from the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) on the Benefits, Challenges, and Desire for Bidirectional Exchange."
- **Beth Stuebing**, Faculty, Nkoma Mission Hospital, Malawi: "Mom's Got a Knife: The Challenges of Motherhood for Female Surgeons" and "Theory on a Cause of Esophageal Squamous Cell Carcinoma in Malawi."
- **Yonas Teferi**, Cardiothoracic Fellow, Tenwek, Kenya: "Cox-maze IV Procedure for Atrial Fibrillation in Rheumatic Heart Disease Patients: Experience from Tenwek Hospital."
- **Blessing Ngoi Ngam**, General Surgery Resident, Mbingo, Cameroon, presented "The Role of the Mentee and the COSECSA Global Surgery Research Program" at the Tuesday pre-conference research course.

The day-long pre-conference workshop on Tuesday Dec. 3 entitled "Grant Writing Research" was co-led by Britney Lynne Grayson, Faculty and Chief Medical Officer of BethanyKids, Kijabe, Kenya, along with Dr. Chris Dodgion of the Association of Academic Surgeons in collaboration with colleagues from the Annals of African Surgery (AAS) of Kenya and the East, Central African Journal of Surgery (ECAJS), the Intuitive Foundation, and others.



## ANNUAL SPIRITUAL RETREATS

*Ed Scarce, DMin, ThM*  
*PAACS Spiritual Dean*



One of the goals of PAACS is to build into each other's lives as we travel along on our journeys of becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. One of the ways we do that is through annual spiritual retreats for each of the PAACS locations. Please find below brief reports from Arusha, Malamulo, and Nkhoma.

### Arusha Lutheran Medical Center



For our spiritual retreat this year, we were privileged to have it at the **“Nuns of St. Francis” Retreat Centre in Marangu, Kilimanjaro.**

Our speaker for the retreat was **Dr. Johnstone Kayandabila**, a doctor at the Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute who is also a holder of a Master's Degree in Business Administration. The topic for day one was **“Financial Literacy for Doctors”** as he felt that most doctors lean in to medicine but struggle financially. In this session he talked about the “10 Commandments of Making Money” where he stressed the ways in which Christians can be financially stable through biblical principles.

For the second day, the speaker talked about **“Team Building and Collaboration.”**

He talked about team building and collaboration as portrayed in *Matthew 4:18-19* stressing that when Jesus was picking His disciples, He picked people with different talents that fit His Ministry perfectly as they complimented each other. He further stressed on the importance of having the same goal and knowing the strength of each member of the team toward attaining the set goal.

As he was winding up, he thought it was important to touch on the topic of **“burnout”** that is very common to doctors globally. He wanted to shed light on the important signs of burnout that doctors need to recognize and act accordingly. He stressed that burnout has been a leading factor to doctors committing suicide among other mental issues.

He advised doctors that, while they are trained to take care of those who are unwell, they should not neglect their own wellbeing as they need to be healthy to be able to take care of those in need.

It was a great weekend with great interactions and teachings.

### Malamulo Adventist Hospital

The Malamulo PAACS program had their annual spiritual retreat on December 5 and 6. It occurred in the beautiful setting of Mulanje at the Kara O' Mula Resort center. We had 33 people come for each day of the retreat which comprised our PAACS and theatre family.



## Malamulo Adventist Hospital



We were blessed to have **Pastor John Phiri** talk as our speaker. His overall theme was **“Finding God’s Purpose For Your Life.”**

We had several interactive sessions throughout the morning and afternoon.

These helped us understand how to keep Jesus as our “Chief Cornerstone” and use this solid foundation to improve our walk with God. Overall, it was a refreshing time, and we thank God for the time we had together as a team to delve deeper into His word.

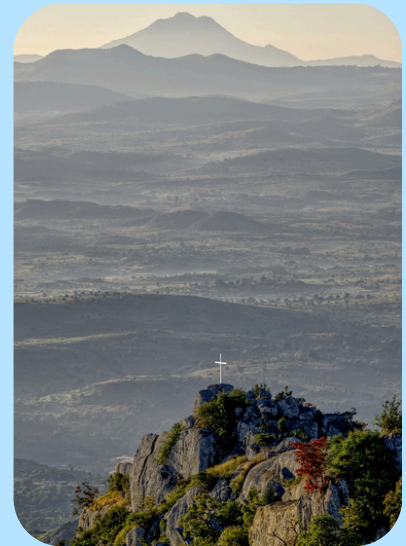
## Nkhoma Mission Hospital

*“Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night.” Luke 6:12*

As we all know, there are many examples in the bible of people retreating to the mountain to meet God. Right behind our hospital is Nkhoma Mountain. This year we spent two days on Nkhoma Mountain for our Spiritual Retreat.



A mountain many of us have never climbed before. Sleeping in tents for the first time. Some of us had concerns if we can get everyone up. And then there was the food, over a 100 litres of drinking water. But when we heard our kids screams of joy when they expressed their excitement of sleeping in tents, we knew it was worth the effort.



The topic was: **“The Surgeon and the Sabbath”** and escaping the hospital for a couple of days seemed a good idea to think, reflect, have time together and enjoy God’s beautiful creation. **Rev. Robert Yanduya** challenged us to have times of Sabbath in a profession where you are on call 24/7. We prayed and worshiped next to a fire under the stars. We climbed the peak and watched the sun rise.

This year’s Spiritual Retreat was different, it challenged us not only spiritually but also physically. But it also brought us closer together, it gave us some memories we will not forget and we met God in a special way too.

# ASUC UPDATE - APPLICATIONS OPEN

*Deborah Eisenhut, MD*  
*Previous Faculty, Mbingo Baptist Hospital*



African Surgeons to Under-Served Communities (ASUC) is an initiative spearheaded by SIM, PAACS and MedSend intended to help PAACS graduate surgeons and related specialists consider missionary service and serve in remote and unreached areas of Africa. Such postings are challenging for many reasons. African missionaries can find it difficult to raise financial support from within Africa. Small hospitals desperately in need of surgical care often cannot afford to pay the salary of a qualified surgeon. Also, PAACS surgeons can find it challenging to educate their children in such places. For this reason, such positions often go unfilled despite the great need.

ASUC was created to provide a portion of the salary/support for five years for PAACS missionary surgeons serving in such needy locations. The actual amount will vary depending on support needs and location. The African missionary surgeon will be able to step immediately into his/her role as a surgeon at such an under-served hospital giving him/her an additional five years to raise the needed support and giving time for the hospital to develop the capacity to pay an increased salary.

Participants in the program need to be missionaries with a mission agency that provides quality training and excellent member care and that is in partnership with MedSend, the primary source of funding.

Contact Dr. Deborah Eisenhut at [Deborah.eisenhut@sim.org](mailto:Deborah.eisenhut@sim.org) to receive a list of such mission organizations, to obtain an application or to ask more questions.

## Pray about your involvement!

Applications close  
*February 28, 2025.*

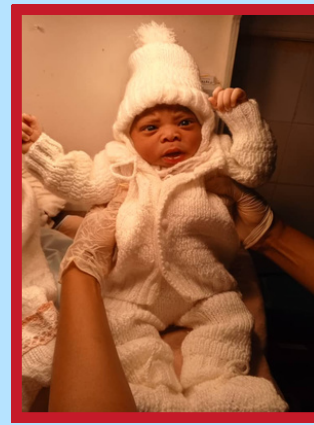
Applicants may apply to the ASUC program and a mission agency concurrently. Mission agency acceptance can take time—often a year or so. If accepted to the ASUC program, a PAACS graduate can still be in the process of the mission agency application. ASUC can mentor and walk through the mission agency process with the PAACS graduate as needed. The PAACS graduate would have one year after acceptance into the ASUC program to be accepted into a mission agency.

We hope that many PAACS graduates will be encouraged to consider working in underserved and unreached areas knowing that the ASUC program is a resource to help make it possible.



# Christmas Eve Baby at Mbingo

PAACS Mbingo welcomed a baby boy on Christmas Eve. Born to Dr. Elvis and Audrey Sonfack, he weighed in at 3.5kg.



# Successful Giving Tuesday

Preparing for the new year, we are trusting God to provide for the work ahead. To meet the needs of our programs, **we need to raise \$819,000 in December** to stay on track towards our overall \$4.2 million budget.

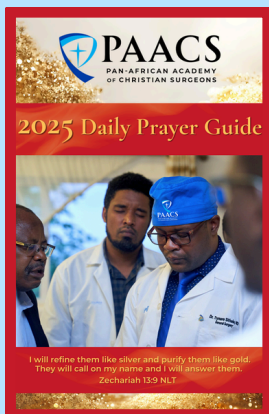


Thanks to a very successful Giving Tuesday, where we raised **\$31,378**—surpassing our goal of \$25,000—we got off to a great start and are optimistic about reaching our target. If you haven't yet made a year-end gift, please consider doing so, [here](#).

Every gift helps train and disciple more surgeons and related specialists who will bring healing and hope in Christ's name to communities across Africa.

# Recently Published

Prayer Guide



↓ DOWNLOAD

Alumni Newsletter



↓ DOWNLOAD



SHOP NOW >>



# PRAYER & PRAISE

- Pray for God's favor over all PAACS training programs, that they will glorify God and be used to impact Africa for His Kingdom.
- May God sustain, protect, and provide His grace to all PAACS residents, faculty, graduates, and their families. Pray for their spiritual well-being.
- Pray for the newest residents beginning their journey with PAACS in January 2025. May they be blessed with God's favor and grace.
- Pray for the newest graduates of PAACS, may they follow God's will for their lives and find their place to serve Him by caring for the underserved people of Africa.

Each month, we pray for residents by name. Please join us this month by covering these residents in prayer:

- Ian Simel
- Linda Thure
- Ondago Faith Akinyi
- Brenda Laureen Nyambake
- Gael Brilliant Gahimbare
- George Waiyaki Karanja
- Daniel Baraka Karomo
- Ian Kiptoo Phillip Mutai
- Nelson Kipkoros Tarus
- Faith Gachie
- Ndayishimiye Jean Baptiste
- Jane Kiplagat Kipsamo



***If you have not given to PAACS this year, please prayerfully consider a year-end gift before December 31st to help us train and disciple 190 residents and fellows in 2025. EVERY GIFT COUNTS!***

GIVE (U.S.)

GIVE (CANADA)

GIVE (OUTSIDE  
U.S. & CANADA)

# ARTICLES ON SURGERY, OB/GYN, AND ANESTHESIA

*Compiled by Margaret Tarpley*

- [Virtual Reality for Perioperative Anxiety Treatment in a Resource-variable Setting: An Observational Trial \(See PAACS authors\)](#)
- [From Short-term Engagements to Meaningful and Equitable Global Health Partnerships](#)
- [Comparison of Postoperative Outcomes Among Patients Treated by Male Versus Female Surgeons](#)
- [Implementing a Global Mentoring Program: A Call to Action for Mentorship in Surgery](#)
- [Education and Training in Global Neurosurgery: The Quest for Diversity and Equitable Collaborations](#)
- [The Low-Cost, Battery-Powered AI-Enabled Ultrasound Device That Could Improve Global Obstetric Care](#)
- [Menopause: A Global Health and Wellbeing Issue that Needs Urgent Attention](#)
- [Technical Priorities for Orthopaedic Trauma Care Development in Malawi](#)
- [Defining the Contribution of Human Error to Adverse Events in a Surgical Service](#)
- [Mechanical Bowel Preparation Reduces Anastomotic Leaks in Surgery](#)
- [Determining Optimal Timing of Birth for Women with Chronic or Gestational Hypertension at Term: The WILL \(When to Induce Labour to Limit risk in pregnancy hypertension\) Randomised Trial](#)

Read more articles compiled by Margaret Tarpley by [clicking here!](#)

## CONNECT

