

OUTREACH SCHOLARSHIP COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AWARD

In recognition of mutually beneficial and sustained campus-community research partnerships.

Gretchen L. Birbeck

Chieftainess Mwenda of the Basanje Royal Establishment, and the Chikankata Epilepsy Care Team, Mazabuka, Zambia

The Outreach Scholarship Community Partnership Award is supported by the MSU Quality Fund.



Gretchen L. Birbeck, Department of Neurology and Ophthalmology, College of Osteopathic Medicine, and Department of Epidemiology, College of Human Medicine; Chieftainess Mwenda of the Basanje Royal Establishment, and the Chikankata Epilepsy Care Team, Mazabuka, Zambia

GRETCHEN L. BIRBECK CHIEFTAINESS MWENDA OF THE BASANJE ROYAL ESTABLISHMENT

Epilepsy is a neurologic disorder that results in recurrent, unprovoked seizures. The biomedical burden of epilepsy can be substantial, but for many the social consequences may be just as extreme, with epilepsy victims suffering from social abandonment and economic and physical vulnerabilities. For more than 15 years, Gretchen L. Birbeck and Chieftainess Mwenda (formerly Ellie Kalichi, RN) have worked together to improve the lives of people with epilepsy in rural Zambia. The scholarly contributions from this work are regularly utilized by the World Health Organization in the development of more optimal programs of epilepsy care and care delivery in Africa. In March 2010, this MSU-Zambia collaboration was declared to be "a global success story" by the U.S. National Institutes of Health's Fogarty International Center.

Dr. Birbeck and Chieftainess Mwenda have served as expert advisors on community-based epilepsy care for the Zambian Ministry of Health, the World Bank, and the U.S. Institute of Medicine. Through research and advocacy, they have identified global problems in drug access for people with epilepsy in low income countries, famine-related drug toxicity, and the lack of appropriate treatment for co-morbid

HIV and epilepsy in most of Africa. Recognizing the imperative for knowledge to impact policy, they work tirelessly to bring their findings to the attention of key stakeholders and policy makers.

In 2007, Dr. Birbeck was selected as an Ambassador for Global Research by the Paul G. Rogers Society. She has been featured in *The Lancet Neurology* and has more than 60 publications related to her research in sub-Saharan Africa. Since joining MSU in 2000, her work has been awarded more than \$2 million in funds for research and capacity building.

