

Understanding Religious Perspectives about Death and Sample Collection from Dead Bodies Using Minimally Invasive Tissue Sampling in the Context of the CHAMPS Study in Harar and Kersa: Eastern Ethiopia.

Ketema Degefa¹, Mohammad Aliyi¹, Berhanu Damise¹, Azeb Kidane¹, Caroline Ackley³, Lola Madrid^{1,2}, Nega Assefa^{1,4}, Ahoua Kone⁵, Maria Maixenchs⁶, John Blevins⁵

1. Hararge Health Research Partnerships College of Health and Medical Sciences Haramaya University, Ethiopia, 2. London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine London, 3. Brighton and Sussex Medical School United Kingdom 4. College of Health and Medical Sciences Haramaya University, Ethiopia, 5. Emory Global Health Institute, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 6. IS Global, Hospital Clinic-Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

Background

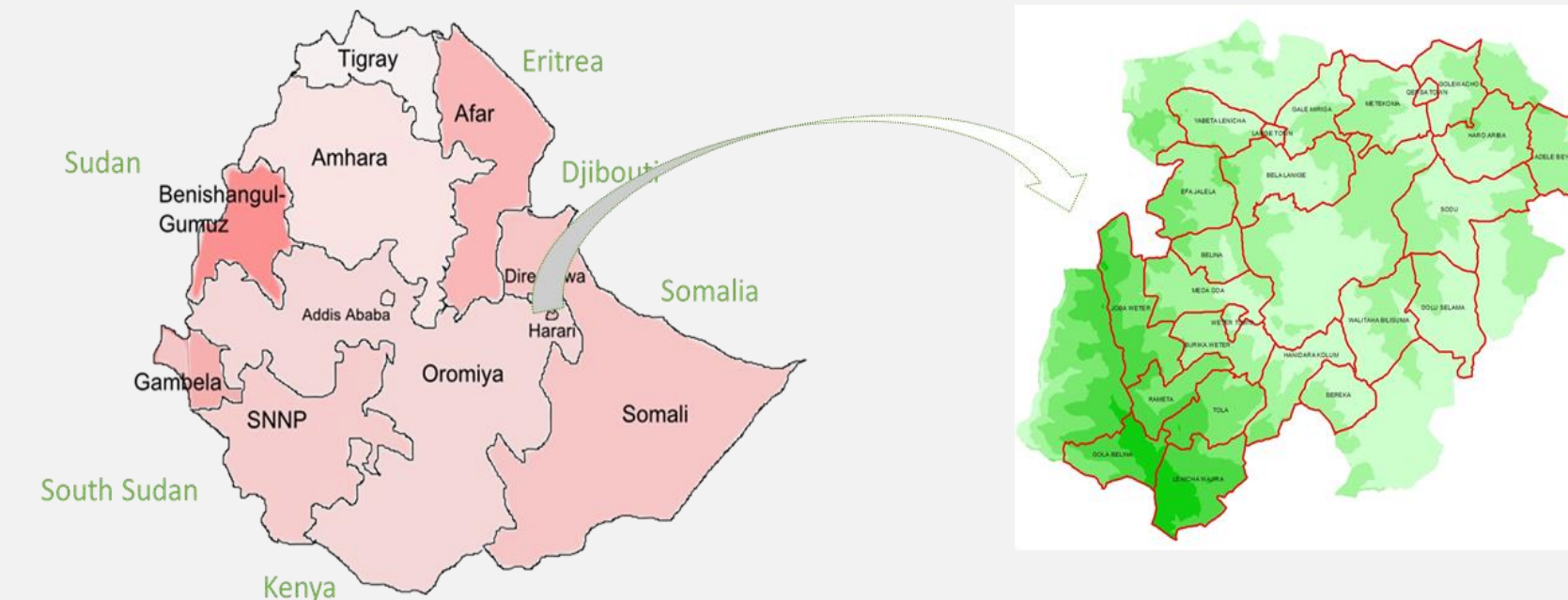
- Ethiopia is one of the countries of high under-five and infant mortality rate 55 and 43 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- In Ethiopia, children often die at home without medical supervision and no one knows the cause of under-five death.
- CHAMPS is a Program that aims to track definitive causes of child mortality in sites and produce and disseminate high-quality data to inform policy and public health action.
- CHAMPS employs minimally invasive tissue sampling (MITS) to gather small samples of body fluids and tissue from the bodies of children who have died that uses a special instrument with a spring-loaded needle a mechanism to gather the samples without any incisions on the body.
- Socio-behavioral studies are being conducted related to death and dying in the study site to investigate child cause of death through biomedical procedures.
- Religious leaders are socially assigned to prepare, wash, wrap, and pray with the dead body. Knowing the role of religious affiliation, religious beliefs, and practices in sample collection from dead bodies for the cause of death, a determination is significant for the consent process, MITS doing, and increase acceptability

Methods

- Qualitative data collection tools was used
- The study was conducted in Harar city and Kersa district, Eastern Ethiopia, at the study site of Harar and Kersa Health Demographic Surveillance site (KDHS) and at Hiwot Fana Specialized University Hospital, Harar.
- Seventy-six participants took part in the study through qualitative data collection, which included in-depth interviews (N=12), semi-structured interview (N=6), focus group discussions (N=6) and participant observation (N=10).
- Data was managed and coded in Nvivo 12, and thematically analyzed; to identify patterns, commonalities, and differences among the emerging themes



"God who created the soul and who will take the soul and the body will turn to dust"
(Catholic priest FGD)



Conclusion

- This formative qualitative study provided an opportunity to views of religious leaders towards death and dying in the study site to investigate child cause of death and new techniques of MITS to the site
- Understanding the role of religion in collecting tissue samples has practical implications for health practitioners; especially to sample collection from dead bodies using MITS .
- Findings from this research will be vital in providing appropriate counseling and consent for MITS.
- To understand the feasibility and acceptability of MITS in Ethiopia, close follow-up of study participants is needed to understand the consent and decision-making process, and explore factors that could affect the acceptance for MITS
- Overall, **religious leaders viewed the MITS procedure positively when it is performed with respect to the deceased body and religious procedures**

Results

- Both Muslim and Christian participants explained death is the will of God
- Mothers reported that when a child death happens at early age it is called *shafaa*. The child should not have died; however, God took the child's soul. His/her soul enter heaven as death children have no sin.
- Muslim religious leaders stated that after a child dies their soul is detached from the body and becomes an independent entity and the soul is capable of conducting its function (pray or intercession to Allah) without the physical body.
- Christian participants explained that, at death, the body returns to dust while the soul returns to the creator, God.

Will of God: Religious leader's perceptions of death decided and brought by God, CHAMPS cannot reduce from what God/Allah already decided and only God/Allah knows the cause of death.

Muslim objection to MITS: Muslim objections to Minimal invasive tissue sampling for the dead bodies have emerged on the importance of body holiness at death; MITS procedure will delay burial, the sacredness of the body and how the corps perceives pain.

See more data at
champshealth.org



Contact Information

Ketema Degafa
Social and Behavioral Scientist
CHAMPS-Ethiopia / Haramaya
University
T: +251 963 345 206
degefaketema30@gmail.com

Berhanu Damise
Social and Behavioral Scientist
CHAMPS-Ethiopia / Haramaya
University
T: +251 910 436 315
damiseberhanu@gmail.com