

Make the Journey – Share the Knowledge

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Many medical professionals from developed countries engage in activities in the “developing world” for the purpose of promoting or improving health. There are few, if any, published reports of institutional partnerships between US and African medical schools characterized by long-term commitment and broad institutional involvement. The partnership between Indiana University School of Medicine (IUSM) and Moi University Faculty of Health Sciences (MUFHS) in Eldoret, Kenya represents a unique model.

Since 1989, IUSM and MUFHS have collaborated to promote collegial relationships among US and Kenyan physicians, scientists, and students built on the premise that individual and institutional good derives from the integrity of individual counterpart relationships. The partnership emphasizes bilateral exchange, mutual benefit and long-term commitment on personal and institutional levels. It is departmentally based and integrated across multiple disciplines and throughout all levels of both institutions from the student body to department heads and deans. The collaboration is an equitable partnership that helps to create opportunities for professional and personal development and scholarly achievements by groups at both institutions.

Each American visitor in Kenya links with his/her appropriate Kenyan counterpart. Since 1990, more 600 IU students, residents and faculty members have participated in the program to care for patients at the hospital or surrounding rural areas, staying on average two and six months. The IUSM supports a minimum of one full-time faculty position as the on-site “team leader” in Eldoret, Kenya. The team leaders share with their Kenyan counterparts the responsibilities of teaching and curriculum development, patient care and research activities. Currently there are three full-time faculty positions filled to address the tripartite mission of education, research and service – “team leader” (a Fulbright Scholar), research director (job shared on a 3 month rotation) and clinical chief. The majority of faculty participating in the IUSM-MUFHS program are from the Department of Medicine, but faculty from pediatrics, pathology, dermatology, anesthesiology, family medicine, psychiatry, OBGYN, surgery and radiology have also participated. Physicians from other US academic medical centers have also participated in the IUSM-MUFHS program. This has resulted in the creation of the ASANTE Consortium (American/sub-Saharan Africa Network for Training and Education in Medicine) whose institutions have also made a long-term commitment to MUFHS. In order to accommodate the many participants, IUSM maintains ‘*IU House*’ which is a compound of five houses that has a staff of more than a dozen individuals.

The IUSM-MUFHS partnership encourages bilateral exchange. IUSM and its partners in ASANTE Consortium have sponsored selected MUFHS students to take two-month electives in the US. Moi faculty members, residents and staff have also visited and trained at IUSM in such areas as medical informatics, cardiology and general internal medicine.

Funding comes from a number of sources. Several departments, divisions and individuals within the IUSM maintain a financial commitment. Diverse activities such as a work-study program for medical students; scholarships for impoverished students; awards to promote Kenyan women in medicine; a sustainable agricultural project; procurement of educational resources, medical equipment and medicines; Kenyan research and faculty development; community based education and service, and other programs are supported by philanthropic efforts. Numerous competitive grants have been awarded (see below).

Outcomes fall both into the tangible and intangible realms. Publications in the medical literature as a result of the collaboration number more than two dozen. In recognition of the ongoing work and the future possibilities for cutting edge projects, more than two dozen grants have been awarded by a variety of agencies including NIH/Fogarty International Center, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, United States Agency for International Development and, most recently, the U.S. Agency for International Development.¹ More difficult to assess is the profound personal and professional development that occurs as a result of one's involvement. Invariably, participants talk about the "life changing" effect the experience has had on them. From teaching and diagnostic skills to community involvement to personal beliefs and relationships, everyone seems to be impacted in some way.

The fundamental principle of the IUSM-MUFHS program is the commitment to a longstanding relationship whose cornerstone is based on mutual benefit, collaboration, and shared values, mission and goals. This practice model of international medicine is one initiative that holds the promise for the answers to the world's great medical challenges and for the development of tomorrow's medical leaders.

To learn more about this exciting program visit the following web sites:

Indiana University School of Medicine and Moi University Faculty of Health Sciences International medicine program <http://medicine.iupui.edu/kenya/introduction.html>

The IU School of Medicine and Moi University Faculty of Health Sciences medical education CD <http://medsci.indiana.edu/c602web/kenya/start.htm>

Information contained in this synopsis is from handouts distributed to IUSM personnel during an orientation program prior to departure.

¹ IU program wins \$1.6 million grant for AIDS fight in Kenya
The Associated Press February 5, 2004 5:31 PM
<http://www.indystar.com/articles/5/118024-7265-127.html>