

EDITORIAL**HEALTH RESEARCH AND MFM SUBSPECIALTY**

Research has become an integral part of the fellowship programmes in Ghana. In the GCPS the examinations for these fellowships include the submission and defense of dissertations by the candidates and therefore there is the need for them to undertake crucial research activities while in training. Research is a tool that is under-utilized and neglected; this has retarded improvement in the quality of health in developing countries. Research can provide solutions that may already be available and affordable. It can also generate new ideas for better understanding of issues and for fresh interventions. Biomedical and clinical research is constantly being carried out in Ghana but measures to strengthen the capacity are often modest in scale.

Globally the demographic transition of countries from developing to advanced ones plays a major role in selecting the types of research undertaken in these countries. Pre-transitional infections and parasitic diseases are important. Post-transitional problems such as AIDS, substance abuse, and occupational health hazards cause significant morbidity and mortality. Research into identification and modification of risk factors is necessary for the post transitional diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and coronary artery diseases.

Research enhances improvement in reproductive health including family planning and safe sex, prevention of maternal mortality and the promotion of child survival and development. Technological research, policy and socio-behavioral research and health system research are all important for development.

Research is needed into micronutrient deficiency (vitamin A, iodine and iron). Applied research on essential drugs is needed for us to evaluate the impact of pharmaceutical policies on drug use patterns, define the economic and clinical scope of particular drug use problems, delineate the motivations and incentives among providers and consumers for misuse of pharmaceuticals, determine the most efficient and cost effective regulatory, managerial and educational interventions for promoting effective drug use. Behavioral health in developing countries must be given its deserved priority in the considerations of national governments and the international funding community.

We need rigorous and cost-effective methods for analysis of health research for health improvement by using new and more successful intervention technologies and strategies as has been applied to polio vaccination for example.

Less -costly inputs and interventions to achieve good health such as the use of ORS, cheaper strategies of treatment such as the ambulatory method of treatment of tuberculosis (DOTS), new and powerful strategies such as the use of community health workers backed by a few well-trained health professionals to extend primary health care to rural villages represent more efficient ways to deploy resources to identify and target groups of people who are at risk of developing a particular disease.

The WHO in collaboration with other agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank continue to support research efforts world -wide. The Wellcome Trust (for Medical and Veterinary research), the Carnegie Corporation (for Strengthening human resources), the Ford Foundation (for Reproductive Health) and the Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation (for Leprosy and Guinea worm) have been very helpful in many research efforts in these specialized areas of health.

In Walks “Maternal and Fetal Medicine” (MFM) subspecialty

We welcome on board the new subspecialty of MFM which is being hosted by the Faculty of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the GCPS. It has been the result of a collaborative effort of the members of the faculties at KBTH and KATH and some external faculties and fellows. We have received a lot of encouragement from Prof Tim R. B. Johnson of the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, USA); Prof Heather Scott (University of Halifax in Canada) has also shown a lot of interest in the MFM programme in Ghana. GCPS will have to formalize these arrangements as early as possible. The contacts will help in the training of fellows in research and the development of innovations in the subspecialty. The strategic plan of the GCPS should make it possible for fellows to imbibe new teaching and learning models and use research facilities that may not be available in Ghana. Similar to the Office of Research, Innovation and Development (ORID) of the University of Ghana, GCPS can acquire a “Grant Management” software to help in the efficient and effective research management services. One expects the GCPS to develop the capacity to manage intellectual property and technology transfer, ethics and research dissemination and to seek external funding for research.

Reference

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