Editorial

The College of Medicine has been a beneficiary of research grants focusing on generating research results to address specific research questions. Most of the funding agencies assume that there is an optimal research environment at institutional, health facility and community level to host research studies. However, in most cases, community members are least knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities in research and the risk and benefits of research. In this issue, Dr Lucinda Manda-Taylor provides an overview of a new research grant from the European Developing Clinical Trial Partnerships (EDCTP) that focuses on the improving the community environment where research is conducted. The EDCTP has led the way among funding agencies in enhancing the research environment in resource-poor countries. Other funding agencies should emulate this example.

Dr Victor Mwapasa, Director, Research Support Centre

Human Subjects Protection Grant (HSP Project)

Implementation of clinical research at the College of Medicine has increased rapidly over the past few years. In order to promote and enhance research integrity and comply with international standards of Good Clinical Practice (GCP), the College of Medicine Research and Ethics Committee (COMREC) reviews and approves applications for clinical trials. However, there is lack of engagement of potential and actual participants of clinical research on their rights and responsibilities and potential risks and benefits of research.

Recently, the CoM has received a Capacity Building Grant from the European Developing Countries Clinical Trial Partnerships (EDCTP) entitled “Enhancing Community Understanding and Participation in Human Subjects Protection in Malawi” that focuses on protection of the safety and well being of participants. This grant has three major aims: (1) to further enhance the understanding of researchers and research staff within the CoM and in the country on human subjects’ protection in research; (2) to enhance the knowledge and understanding of communities (research participants) on matters relating to human subject protection; (3) to establish Community Advisory Groups [CAGS] in communities hosting clinical research projects. CAGS offer an important channel of communication between the actual and potential study participants and research scientists.

Some of the major activities of this grant include the formulation and delivery of basic modules on human subjects protection tailored to the research community and research participants and the establishment of guidelines for the formation and operations of CAGs, specifically in areas where no CAG structures are in place. Ultimately, this project will influence research policy in Malawi, in terms of enhancing the engagement of research participants.

For more information, please contact Lucinda Manda-Taylor, Project Coordinator mandal@medcol.mw. For any suggestions please contact the Editor on info@medcol.mw.

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   b. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
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1. Upcoming Events

A. Community understanding and participation in human subject protection in Malawi courses
   The dates will be announced

B. Good Clinical Practice Training Course
   The RSC will conduct a short course in GCP on 26-28 May 2011. Registration forms can be downloaded from the weblink: http://www.medcol.mw/rsc/courses.htm. Alternatively you can contact the RSC at info@medcol.mw.

C. Wellcome Trust Workshop
   The MLW will conduct the workshop on 10 – 16 September 2011. For more information visit: http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Education-resources/Courses-and-conferences/Advanced-Courses-and-Scientific-Conferences/Advanced-Courses/WTX050986.htm

2. Training Opportunities

A. Applications 2011 – 2012 CARTA PHD Fellowships
   The CARTA program draws together disciplines required to address the complex processes that influence health. These disciplines include Epidemiology, Psychology, Biostatistics, Anthropology, Health Economics, Health Promotion; Demography, Sociology, Health Systems, Health Policy, Development Studies, and their interfaces with the biomedical sciences. The CARTA multidisciplinary approach will prepare its graduates to better address questions of contemporary policy relevance such as the social determinants of health, and the limited impact of technological advances on health in Africa. For further information visit: http://cartafrica.org/insidepage/?id=103
   Application Deadline: 15 April 2011

B. TWAS - the academy of science for the developing world
   The TWAS South-South Fellowships Programme provides over 300 fellowships each year tenable in developing countries such as Brazil, China, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan and Thailand for scientists from developing countries. Fellowships, for various lengths of time, are available for postgraduate, postdoctoral and advanced research. For additional information, including eligibility criteria and application forms, please visit: http://www.twas.org>Programmes>Exchange

3. Funding Opportunities

A. Health Research Capacity Strengthening Capacity Initiative (HRCSI)
   HRCSI offers scholarships at Masters and PhD levels. Training fellowships are open to all Malawians. Fellowships are offered in target disciplines. For further information visit: http://www.medcol.mw/rsc/HRCSI fellowship funding documents.pdf
   Application Deadline: 15 April 2011

B. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
   The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is now accepting grant proposals for Round 7 of Grand Challenges Explorations, an initiative to encourage innovative and unconventional global health solutions. Applicants can be at any experience level; in any discipline; and from any organization, including colleges and universities, government laboratories, research institutions, non-profit organizations and for profit companies.
   Application Deadline: 19 May 2011

C. Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development
   USAID, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Grand Challenges Canada, the Government of Norway, and the World Bank have joined together to launch Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development, to find the tools and approaches to help the mothers and newborns during their most vulnerable hours. The
A list of publications authored by College of Medicine faculty and affiliate members from March 2010 to February 2011.


