

More than 1000 Medical Students from the University of Nairobi will benefit from a training program seeking to equip them with skills to avert the diabetes epidemic. The three year Capacity Advancement Program comes hot on the trail of reports that 1.6 million Kenyans are grappling with diabetes with the figure projected to rise to 2.5 million by 2025.

The Nairobi University students together with select others from Makerere University and University of Namibia will receive advanced professional know-how to curb the high incidence of diabetes.

Merck Serono Chief Executive Officer Dr Stefan Oschmann said “The rising number of diabetics all over the world is a call to prioritize diabetes care and awareness to prevent the disease from turning into a national epidemic. Through the leadership, faculty leaders and students, this program will seek to improve the health care sector throughout Africa.”

The project will focus on Diabetes research and development, clinical research, supply chain integrity and efficiency, Pharmaco-vigilance, medical education and community awareness.

The initiative will also support the development of educational programs such as accredited Clinical Diabetes Management training mainly targeting medical undergraduates at local universities in Africa

so that, ultimately, they act as diabetes ambassadors.

In the near future it will address the medical education for health care providers in rural areas.

University of Nairobi, Principal of the College of Health Sciences, Professor Isaac O. Kibwage, said “Nairobi University is ready to support initiatives such as Merck Serono’s Capacity Advancement Program and associate with other institutions whose overall objectives and goals are directed towards alleviating challenges in the provision of healthcare especially emerging

diseases such as Diabetes.”

Prof. Kibwage explained that in order to achieve sustainable economic development and a middle income state in Kenya by 2030, there was need to transform the health sector to provide quality, accessible and equitable health care and this will start within universities.

The Ministries of Health have raised the red flag that diabetes is becoming a major health threat as it is estimated that 90 per cent of the affected persons are in the productive age-range of 18-60 years.

The project is an extension of the Diabetes Awareness and Prevention Campaign launched early this year by Merck Serono in conjunction with Kenyatta Hospital and the Diabetes Management and Information Centre to prevent or delay the development of diabetes in the Kenyan population.

A two-day Diabetes Medical Camp organized by Merck Serono in conjunction with Kenyatta National Hospital saw about 900 people screened and educated on ways to prevent or manage the condition effectively.

Merck Serono seeks to establish its CAP with various African countries through engaging local stakeholders in order to develop structured, country specific and partnership based programmes that add value to the society and scientific community.

For instance, by partnering with the University of Nairobi, Merck serono will ensure that the CAP initiatives are rolled out and implemented throughout Kenya.

Kenyan Varsity Students to Benefit from a Diabetes Capacity Advancement Program

Written by Kevin Wafula

Oschmann said the CAP project will provide critical education and empowerment to those affected and dealing with diabetes to show the way to manage and prevent it. "This demonstrates our Commitment to long-term partnership for providing accessible and equitable health care as well as contributing to social and economic development of the continent" he reiterated.

With Merck Serono's long experience in diabetes management, beginning in 1957 with the development of metformin (Glucophage), it seeks to raise awareness of diabetes in Africa by educating the public and supporting the health care system on ways to prevent, diagnose and manage the condition effectively.

This three year program will be offered by the Serono Symposia International Foundation (SSIF) - an independent organization providing medical education programs accredited by the European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME).

This program is made possible through an educational grant from Merck Serono and will be conducted initially at the University of Namibia, the University of Nairobi and Makerere University in Uganda.

Professor C Opio, Senior Lecturer at Makerere University said: "We are happy with our PPP with MS to implement their capacity advancement program in Uganda and Makerere University to support diabetes health care in Uganda.

This program will contribute to provide accredited scientific education for diabetes health care providers in rural areas and Clinical Diabetes management for medical undergraduates of local African universities so that, ultimately, they act as Diabetes ambassadors. We welcome these kinds of initiatives in our country and look forward to the success of this PPP".

While Prof Peter Nyarango, Founding Dean of the University Of Namibia School Of Medicine emphasized that: "The University Of Namibia School Of Medicine in particular is delighted and honored to be part of this initiative. The School of Medicine is a pioneer in Health Care delivery for Namibia with intent to turn out highly skilled Health professionals for the country and Africa as a whole. Considering that recent WHO statistics reveals that Non Communicable disease

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(NCD) account for 38% of all mortality, while cardiovascular disease including diabetes account for 19% of the Namibian population, the importance of this program cannot be overemphasized. This program will serve as an excellent platform for further development of a specific policy that is operational for NCD, particularly Diabetes and Obesity.

The initiative will improve the quality of future Diabetes medical care. This will definitely go a long way in improving diabetes health care not only in Namibia but the rest of Africa”.