

Twining Partnership Helps to Reshape Pharmacy Training and Practice in Ethiopia

Twining Center partners at Addis Ababa University (AAU) School of Pharmacy and Howard University School of Pharmacy are ramping up efforts to reshape pharmacy education and practice in Ethiopia.



Howard University partners (l-r) Drs. Olu Olusanya, Muhammad Habib, and Sally Bwayo with their Addis Ababa University counterparts Prof. Tsige Gebre Mariam and Dr. Teferi Gedif.

With support from PEPFAR through CDC/Ethiopia, partners have identified gaps in existing pre- and in-service pharmacy training programs and are working to shift the didactic paradigm toward clinical practice in recognition of the critical role pharmacists play in comprehensive, high quality HIV/AIDS treatment and care.

“Assessments conducted in the early stages of the partnership reinforced our understanding of the need for more clinical training for our pharmacy students,” says Dr. Ephrem Engidawork, professor of pharmacy at AAU.

“Our goal is to ensure that graduates are able to effectively meet the needs of people and that means learning clinical skills rather than focusing

solely on drug formulations and products as they were taught in the past,” he continues.

With input from the Howard partners, AAU spearheaded efforts to revise and standardize the curriculum for pharmacy students on a national level.

This curriculum has already been approved by the School of Pharmacy and is awaiting approval by the university. Plans are to implement it for the first time with the incoming class of 80-100 undergraduate pharmacy students in November 2008.

According to Dr. Teferi Gedif, dean of AAU’s School of Pharmacy, two important activities that will support the new curriculum are a soon-to-be established Drug Information Center at AAU School of Pharmacy and a Preceptors Training Program — both of which will enhance clinical training.

“Howard University has been teaching a patient-oriented clinical pharmacy curriculum for more than 20 years, so their experience provides us with a rich array of learning opportunities,” Gedif points out.

“We were able to see how the clinical practice of pharmacy is implemented there, participate in clinical rounds at their teaching hospital, and see how they train and mentor their students, which has been invaluable,” Gedif stresses.

In May 2008, partners conducted a two-day “Workshop on Preceptorship of Pharmacy Students in Clinical Training” to identify potential preceptors and rotation sites, as well as to familiarize identified preceptors with training guidelines.

A total of 15 medical and pharmacy faculty from Black Lion Hospital and AAU completed the training and are ready to assist with implementation of the new clinical pharmacy curriculum.

Key topics discussed at the training included principles and practices of pharmaceutical care, new directions in pharmacy education, identifying common problems with drug therapies, and clinical learning. Effective communication and adult learning techniques were also covered.

Another important goal of the workshop was to inform physicians at Black Lion Hospital — a teaching hospital affiliated with AAU — of the important contributions skilled clinical pharmacists can make to improving the quality of patient care and increasing adherence to life-saving ARV treatment regimens.

The event also served to open discussions among the hospital's clinical staff and AAU faculty to better ensure pharmacy training and continuing education programs are in keeping with the needs of care teams that provide ART and other services to PLWH.

"Our work together has had a huge impact on the direction of professional pharmacy education and practice in Ethiopia," Gedif says, calling the peer-to-peer twinning partnership invaluable and a strong catalyst for positive, system-wide changes.

"The partnership came at a good time. It has made it possible for us to harmonize clinical pharmacy education in the four existing schools of pharmacy, as well as three emerging schools," Gedif admits.

"We've laid the foundation with our work to date, but we must continue this collaboration in the future in order to address critical issues such as quality assurance and faculty development to ensure sustainability," he concludes.



Drs. Olu Olusanya and Muhammad Habib of Howard University chat with a local pharmacist during a recent partnership exchange in Addis Ababa.