# African Journal Partnership Project



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## Background

- Biomedical journals in the developing world face many obstacles to providing critical medical information to local health practitioners and research scientists.
- There is an urgent need to establish or strengthen a research culture that emphasizes scientific inquiry, sound research, and research integrity and that results in quality reporting of research findings in scientific publications.
- Despite the recognized benefits of medical journals to health practitioners
  - Africa's medical journal production and distribution are low
  - And therefore, do not make research from endemic areas readily available and accessible to colleagues on the continent or in the international scientific community

- According to a survey conducted by the WHO in 2002
  - there were 66 medical journals in Africa, less than a third of which were published regularly
- African Journals Online lists 87 health/medical journals from 19 African countries in 2007.
- Compared to those of other continents, African medical/health journals continue to be poorly represented in international indexing services.
  - Among 5000 journals on MEDLINE, 38 are from Africa (13 countries)
  - Among 6700 journals in ISI's Science Citation Index, only 20 are from Africa (4 countries; only 1 on medicine)
  - Biosis has 64 journals from 6 African countries (6 on medicine/health)
- With such poor representation, medical research reported in African journals is not readily available even in Africa.

# How did the African Journal Partnership Project start?

- The US National Institutes of Health (FIC, NLM, NIEHS) convened a meeting in September 2003 in London.
- Objective: to discuss the partnership of 4 African national medical journals with well-established northern hemispheric medical journals as a mechanism to enhance the quality of the African journals and improve the visibility of African medical science.
- The African medical journals were chosen because the journals are in countries that have active NIH-sponsored research and are part of the communication network developed by NLM for the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria.
- Council of Science Editors agreed to provide administrative support

# Journal Partnerships



# Issues to be addressed by partnership

- Limited resources and funding for publication and management
- Undeveloped production and marketing skills
- Inadequate capacity for peer review and evaluation
- Inadequate quality of manuscripts submitted
- Reluctance of local authors to publish in their local journals

# Some partnership project tasks

- Identify editorial needs including training of journal editors
- 2. Identify equipment, facility, and infrastructure needs of African journals
- 3. Provide hardware (computers, printers, scanners, etc), software, and training to editorial office personnel
- 4. Provide author/reviewer training including issues related to standards and norms of publication ethics and research integrity

# Some partnership project tasks

- 5. Help establish business plans for African journals to ensure effective publishing operations and sustainability
- Provide initial financial support for managing editor/business manager at each of the African journal publishing offices
- 7. Identify needs to support online publication of African journals
- 8. Track indicators of success of the capacity building initiative

# Outcomes of the African Journal Partnership Project



### Success – Publication Process

- Increase in manuscripts submitted
  - African Health Sciences: 109 in 2005 and 169 in 2006
  - Mali Medical: 76 in 2005 and 90 in 2006
- Decrease in acceptance rate
  - African Health Sciences: 50% in 2005 and 27% in 2006
- Decrease in average time from submission to publication
  - African Health Sciences: decrease by 2 months
  - Malawi Medical Journal: decrease by 3 months
- Increase in international submissions
  - African Health Sciences: 70 in 2005 and 125 in 2006

### Success – Publication Process

- Increase in the number of reviewers
  - African Health Sciences: increased by 85 in 1 year (50% international)
- Malawi Medical Journal using Web-based manuscript submission and peer review system
  - Decreased reviewer time from 3 months to 1 week
  - Increased number of submissions by 50%
- Purchase of equipment (following local technical site visit)
  - Effective communication
  - In house layout of journal
  - XML conversions
  - Website updating

# Success – Visibility

- All journals online
  - Malawi Medical Journal and Mali Medical available free full text from their own Web sites
  - African Health Science and Ghana Medical Journal indexed in MEDLINE and full text available free on PubMed Central



# MALAWI MEDICAL JOURNAL



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#### Welcome to Malawi Medical Journal

This website is intended to give you a brief overview of the Malawi Medical Journal.

#### Top stories



Dr. Bridon M'baya (Medical Director of Malawi Blood Transfusion Service MBTS) talks to Dr. Baliit Cheema about his life, career and the work of the MBTS

"Bridon M'baya at 31 years of age has come a long way from Juma village where he grew up the eldest son in a large family. "Both my parents are subsistence farmers - peasant farmers. I grew up in ...." Read more »



A tribute to Dr. Steve Graham - The departure of Dr. Steve Graham will be felt by many; students of the College of Medicine, staff in the Paediatrics Department, patients in the paediatric ward of Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, and staff at the Wellcome Trust. Steve came to Malawi over ten years ago as a lecturer in paediatrics in the College of Medicine,...

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Ward round: Chronic respiratory symptoms with no response to tuberculosis treatment in a 35 vear old HIV positive man

A 35 year old HIV positive non smoker presented to Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH), Blantyre, in October 2006 with the following history: ♦ One year of productive cough....

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#### 2nd Annual HIV and AIDS and Nutrition Research Dissemination Conference

Abstracts from symposiom held at College of Medicine in January 2007:

A1: Randomized Controlled Trial comparing the Impact of Supplementary.....

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#### Malawi Medical Journal Search





#### MMJ Issue 06/07

#### 2007

- 1. Vol:19, Num:2
- 2. Vol:19. Num:1

#### 2006

- 1. Vol:18, Num:1
- 2. Vol:18, Num:2
- Vol:18, Num:3
- 4. Vol:18, Num:4



# Success - Capacity Building

### Author/ Reviewer training

- Over 100 authors and reviewers trained since 2005
- Malawi Medical Journal Assoc Editor trained to facilitate author writing workshops

### Other training

- Research methodology
- Capacity building for policy makers to use evidence

### Training

- 10 Editors from the African Journal Partnership and the Forum for African Medical Editors (FAME) trained on journal sustainability
- 2 journals familiar with XML conversions
- 3 Editors trained as Medical Journal Editor
- All Editors are now members of the Council of Science Editors and have attended annual meetings and taken short courses for journal editors, manuscript editing, and statistics

# Success – Research Integrity

- Trained editors have capacity to handle research misconduct
- Guidelines for authors based on ICMJE's Uniform Requirements for the Submission of Biomedical Manuscripts
- Trained authors
  - CONSORT, research methodology, authorship criteria, duplicate publication, conflicts of interest, ethical approval
- Trained reviewers
- Web-based submission and review system

# Challenges

- Get all journals indexed in PubMed's MEDLINE
- Encouraging local researchers to publish in the journal
- Impact factor
- "Safari scientists"
- Language barriers
- Further funding or including more journals