PhD Full time Studentship

Ensuring sustainable medical device availability in African health systems: an East African case study

Further particulars 11762

Medical devices, including diagnostic tools and medical instruments, form a key pillar of health systems, alongside professional staffing and pharmaceuticals. Their availability, affordability and maintenance in low-income African health systems are so weak and fragmented that these systems have been characterised as "medical device graveyards" (WHO, 2010; 2012). Dependence on imports and donations creates mismatch between devices and needs. Many imported medical devices are unsuitable for local conditions and endanger lives of patients, health workers and communities (WHO, 2010). Only 13% devices are manufactured in developing countries (WHO, 2012), offering scope for shortening supply chains and adapting devices to local needs.

Yet the sources of these devices and the reasons for their poor availability and supply are very poorly researched in comparison to the research on access to medicines. This studentship will support research to examine the reasons for poor availability of medical devices in a sample of health facilities in Kenya and/or Tanzania, and to explore the scope for improving availability and access through improved linkages between device suppliers and users, through supply chain strengthening and associated health system improvements.

Research questions may include the following:

- In a sample of health facilities, what is the availability of a defined set of essential medical devices?
- What are the gaps, and the reasons for unavailability?
- What is the scope for improvement, through more effective industrial supplier – health facility user collaboration and linkages, to ensure that the medical device and diagnostics needs of low-income countries can be better met?

References


Application details

This full-time doctoral studentship at the Open University, UK, is funded by the UK Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). Eligible students will be from a low or lower-middle income country, and will preferably have Swahili language skills. Applications from East Africa are particularly welcomed. The student will be co-supervised by Professor Maureen Mackintosh and Dr Dinar Kale at the Open University, and Dr Mercy Karimi Njeru at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) in Nairobi. An Indian co-supervisor, Professor Smita Srinivas, will enable and support the student to investigate the scope for improving access to low cost devices through Indian expertise and collaboration.

Applicants should normally have a Masters-level qualification in a relevant topic, which may include clinical, biomedical, engineering, technological, social or business disciplines. The
student will be one of a cohort of seven doctoral students from low and middle income countries, linked to GCRF-funded Open University research projects. The studentships provide for fees; a student stipend; a research support training grant of £2,500 per annum; and fieldwork research costs of £5000. The student will be based in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, School of PPEDG (Politics, Philosophy, Economics, Development and Geography).

The successful applicant for this studentship will work closely with a research team, based at the Open University, at KEMRI, Kenya, and at the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) in Tanzania, working on a project funded by the GCRF Inclusive Societies Initiative, entitled “How to link industrial and social innovation for inclusive development: lessons from tackling cancer care in Africa” (http://www.open.ac.uk/ikd/research/health-innovation-and-equity/gcrf-inclusive-societies-how-link-industrial-and-social).

Interested applicants can contact Prof. Maureen Mackintosh Maureen.Mackintosh@open.ac.uk; Dr Dinar Kale Dinar.Kale@open.ac.uk or Dr Mercy Njeru MNjeru@kemri.org

**Closing date for applications: 28th November 2018. Interviews are expected to take place in the week beginning 10th December 2018.**

Application forms are available from http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/research-degrees/how-to-apply/mphil-and-phd-application-process

For detailed information and how to apply go to http://www.open.ac.uk/about/employment/vacancies/phd-studentship-11762

Completed application forms, together with a covering letter explaining your interest and suitability to undertake the advertised project and your reasons for applying, must be sent to FASS-PhD-Applications@open.ac.uk by the closing date.