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Letter

Contributing to a better understanding of infectious respiratory diseases in Mozambique

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Infectious respiratory diseases are one of the main causes of mortality in children [1]. Globally, we have seen a reduction of the mortality rates in children younger than 5 years since the '90s thanks to an increase in vaccine coverage and reductions in household air pollution [2]. However, this scenario is different in Sub-Saharan Africa settings, where the universal health coverage effective coverage index is lower than 25 (on a 1 to 100 scale) and vaccine coverage remains challenging [3,4]. Indeed, one of the GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance strategic goals for the upcoming 25 years is to increase equity in immunisation uptake by strengthening health care systems [5].

Besides the limited access to competing funds, a big challenge that LMIC researchers working on paediatric infectious respiratory diseases face is the amount of overall demand from a weak health care system. This is particularly striking in this era of multidrug resistant-tuberculosis, COVID-19, air pollution, and malnutrition which affect a population in demographic transition with a variety of other underlying clinical conditions. The end result is that health care professionals are stretched with clinical duties without sufficient time to dedicate to research or training. In addition, many African public hospitals face chronic staff and consumables shortages, creating a challenge to adhere to research protocols and compromising the completeness of research plans.

Although most research projects result from triangular collaborations, it is important that African researchers participate as soon as initial discussions of proposals and ideas take place. This would be fundamental to plan and define the needed financial, infrastructure and human resources. Research projects aligned with global or national health agendas ultimately fuel further research work and collaborations, allowing the absorption of the trained staff, and contributing to capacity building. On the other side, regional networks are also fundamental, as they represent a mean by which African researchers could easily congregate people with common interests and apply for funds, creating regional capacity to continue research and training.

Overall, as much as an investment in research is needed, it is of extreme importance to strengthen the health care systems to allow continued training of health care professionals in Africa.

Contributors

TM has done the research and wrote the letter.

Declaration of Competing Interest

Author declares no conflict of interest.

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