

EDITORIAL**Institutionalizing Health Research Mentorship in Low and Middle-Income Countries: Filling the Gap in Health Equity****Daniel Yilma, MD, Professor of Internal Medicine, Editor-EJHS**Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ejhs.v33i2.1>

Research mentorship is very important in launching individual research careers, building research teams at the group level, and sustaining research institutions over time (1). Moreover, health research mentorship is critical to advance science and ensure access to equitable and effective health care. Institutionalizing research mentorship is defined as nurturing research capacity in organizations such as universities, professional associations, and research institutes in order to improve research effectiveness and health equity (2).

Strong partnership between high-income countries (HICs) and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) institutions that are aligned with mutual capacity building and base on improving health equity are crucial for addressing the global health challenges. The number of LMIC students and researchers receiving advanced degrees in HICs is increasing (3). This is a great opportunity to increase networking, north-south cooperation and share experience in the research mentorship cultures. This is not, however, sufficient to fill the gap in human resource and health challenges in LMICs. It needs to be coupled with expanding health research mentorship in LMICs institutions. And also strengthen south-south cooperation to improve prioritization of health challenges in LMICs and provide evidence-based appropriate contextual solutions and contribute to global health.

Many research mentorship resources and toolkits have been developed, but mostly are geared to HICs (4). The scarce existing evidences or best practices on research mentorship in LMICs has been a challenge for LMIC health researchers and institutions to easily implement and expand research mentorship at their institutions as the research cultures, resources and capacity differ from HICs.

LMIC institutions often have fewer training grants focused on building research mentorship, fewer senior mentors per mentee, and less institutional support (5). Therefore, the approach to establish, monitor and evaluate institutional research mentorship programme in LMICs need to be tailored to the context and supported with local evidences. TDR global published in 2022 a practical guide (HERMES guide) on institutionalization of health research mentorship in

LMICs (2). The practical guide was developed based on data from a global crowdsourcing open call, a scoping review of evidence from LMICs, and an adapted Delphi method. The guide provides evidence-based strategies to improve health research mentorship at LMIC institutions.

Organizations like universities, professional associations and research institutions in LMICs need to recognize research mentorship as institutional responsibility and nurture, cultivate and sustain the culture of research mentorship in their own institutions to improve health research effectiveness and health equity. Institutionalizing research mentorship is a process, and it is important that LMIC institutions explore the HERMES practical guide and adapt or modify according to the context and local evidence to institutionalize research mentorship until the needed structural changes take place.

REFERENCES

1. Hamid M, Rasheed MA. A new path to mentorship for emerging global health leaders in low-income and middle-income countries. *Lancet Glob Health*. 2022;10(7):e946–8.
2. World Health Organization & UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases. (2022). Health research mentorship in low- and middle-income countries (HERMES): a TDR global practical guide to spur mentorship institutionalization. WHO. Available from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/363381>
3. Lescano AG, Cohen CR, Raj T, *et al*. Strengthening Mentoring in Low- and Middle-Income Countries to Advance Global Health Research: An Overview. *Am J Trop Med Hyg*. 2019;100(1_Suppl):3–8.
4. Chi BH, Belizan JM, Blas MM, Chuang A, Wilson MD, Chibwesa CJ, *et al*. Evaluating Academic Mentorship Programs in Low- and Middle-Income Country Institutions: Proposed Framework and Metrics. *Am J Trop Med Hyg*. 2019;100(1_Suppl):36–41.
5. Nowell L, White D, Benzies K, Rosenau P. Factors that impact implementation of mentorship programs in nursing academia: A sequential-explanatory

mixed methods study. *J Nurs Educ Pract.*
2017;7(10):1.