

Opportunity for research partnership

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Introduction

Globally health is a critical agenda and an inherent component of any development initiative. Efforts made to ensure equitable and quality health services has always been challenged but noticeable progress has also been registered. Compared to 1978 when Primary Health Care was declared in Alma Ata, there are great progress made changes of life expectancy, risk of dying before the age of 5 years and the spectrum of disease is quite different due to demographic and epidemiologic transitions and consequent changes in lifestyle, climate change and steady urbanization and industrialization.(1) The question however is the change in quality of life and the level to which the problem as we see today threaten health of the public. Globally, advocacy for quality of health care, which is key component of the right to health, and the route to equity and dignity, has contributed to an improved wellbeing of the public at large. Due to such global advocacy, many countries have shown improvements in their health care provision at large and to targeted section of the population in particular. Yet, there remains disparities between countries in terms of how health provision is structured, who benefits from the provision and the role of citizens in such a process.

Developments in research meant to improve health provision requires broader collaboration which is an imperative for the development of science, technology and innovation. Improvement of the global health system benefits from such research initiatives where researchers from the global south and global north as well as those from different countries of the global south work together. (2,3) Not only would problems of global profile get better response but also research capacity could be strengthened through south-south and south-north collaboration. (2) Research promotion and capacity of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) by Northern researchers evolved from problem to technical assistance as well as joint learning. (4,5) North-South as well as south-south collaboration has far reaching implication including broadening funding opportunities.

The contributions to this special issue of the Ethiopian Journal of Health Development are from the Republic of Korea. The republic has done very well with universal health coverage, where health status of the public in Korea is generally much better as compared to many Asian countries. The country met universal coverage indicators before the turn of 1990's. In the country, Health care provision in the country relies on private providers which may have its own drawbacks but has since such providers are not subject to fee regulation. There are however critical concerns related to continued tension between private and public provider, high out-of-pocket (OOP) payments, growing demand from the aged population are critical. (6)

Selected research outcomes in this issue were presented at the International Knowledge civilization and Nano Technology Conference (IKNC) of the 2019 edition in Korea. IKNC offers platform for researchers, academies and policies from the fields of health, humanities, Social sciences, and Engineering. Last August, IKNC has organized its regular annual international conference in Jeju, Korea where scientists from specified fields from – countries presented their research work. The conference organizer collaborated with selected peer reviewed online journals including the Ethiopian Journal of Health Development. The purpose of the collaboration was firstly to open up Korean researchers to African readers. Normally, research outcomes from Koreans either end up in local or international journal that would rarely catch sites from African researchers. Thus, this first special issue is believed to open up an avenue to Korean researchers to share their research outcome with Africans. Secondly, this could be an opening for long term research partnership between Africans and Koreans in diverse public health areas of interest. There are quite a lot of opportunities for researchers from Korea and Africa to initiate researches of mutual interest. Furthermore, it is an opportunity for African researchers to explore for opportunities to collaborate with Korean researchers. Thirdly, this is an opportunity to draw interest from African researchers to participate and present their research work in various areas of science at the IKNC annual conference. The conference brings researchers from diverse fields together to share their research results and experiences. African researchers may use such a forum to share their own research outcomes and experiences.

The papers presented in this special issue ranges from medical history of Korea and Japan from 17th to 19th Century to the use of technology for physical exercise to cope with health threats associated with sedentary life. The manuscripts provide useful primary evidences for further research and scientific debate particularly among African researchers in the field. In Africa, a continent that is fast urbanizing there are evidences of shift in disease trajectory from what was purely infectious and communicable to non-communicable diseases. Among others continuous physical exercise is recognized as the best preventive method to such problems. The lessons from the different manuscripts here reveals that physical exercise and self-training on this have a positive health outcome. Psychological distresses in connection to loss of loved ones, due to socio-demographic factors and history of chronic disease history and changes in housing price are other sets of manuscripts of interest that raise useful questions for further research.

Generally, the set of paper in this special issue addresses important areas of interest for future research as well as use inform health strategies and programs.

References

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