

**Malaria Research Capability
Strengthening in an Emerging Medical
Education Institution:
Experiences of the College of Medicine,
University of Malawi**

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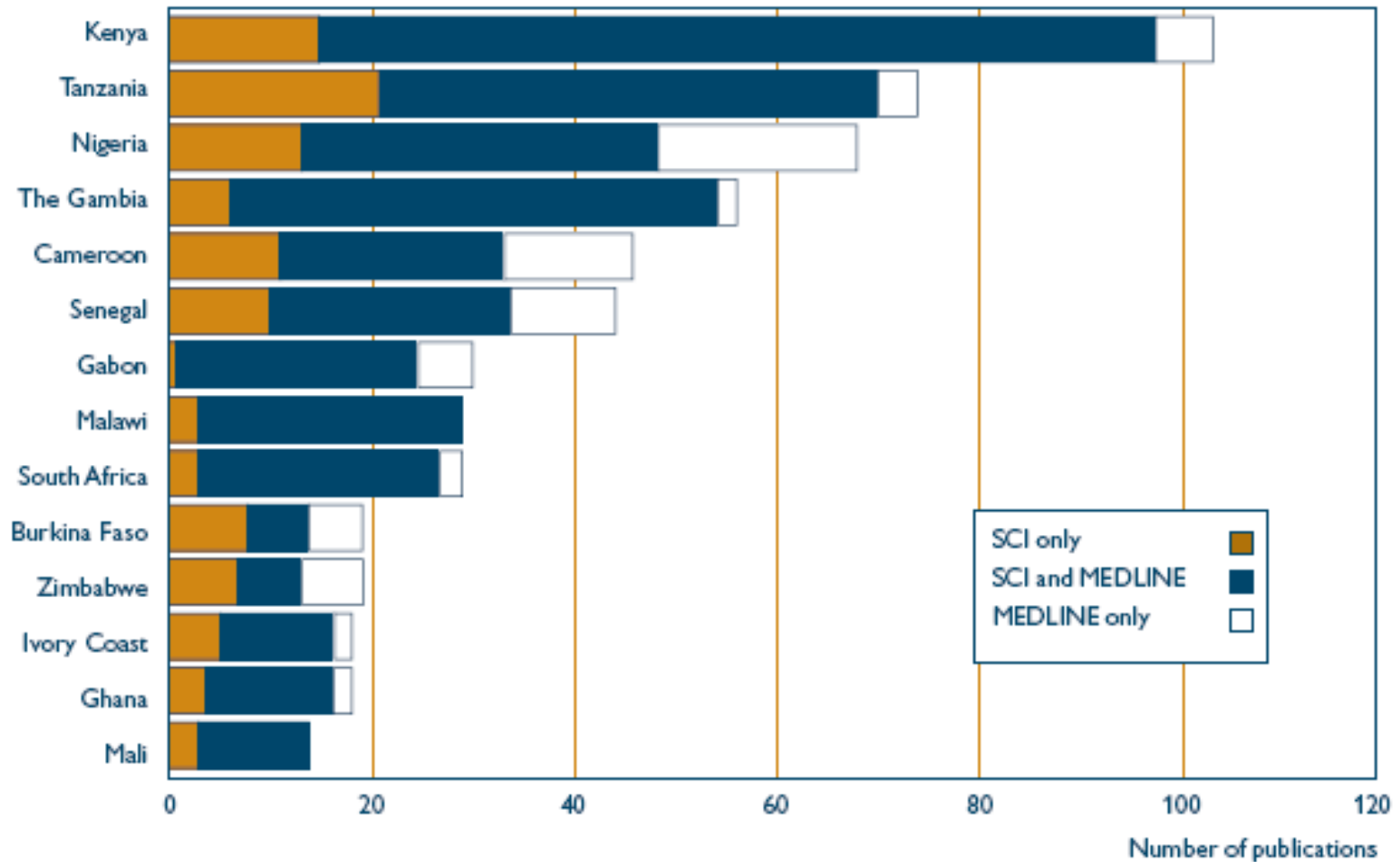
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Research Support Centre
College of Medicine
University of Malawi

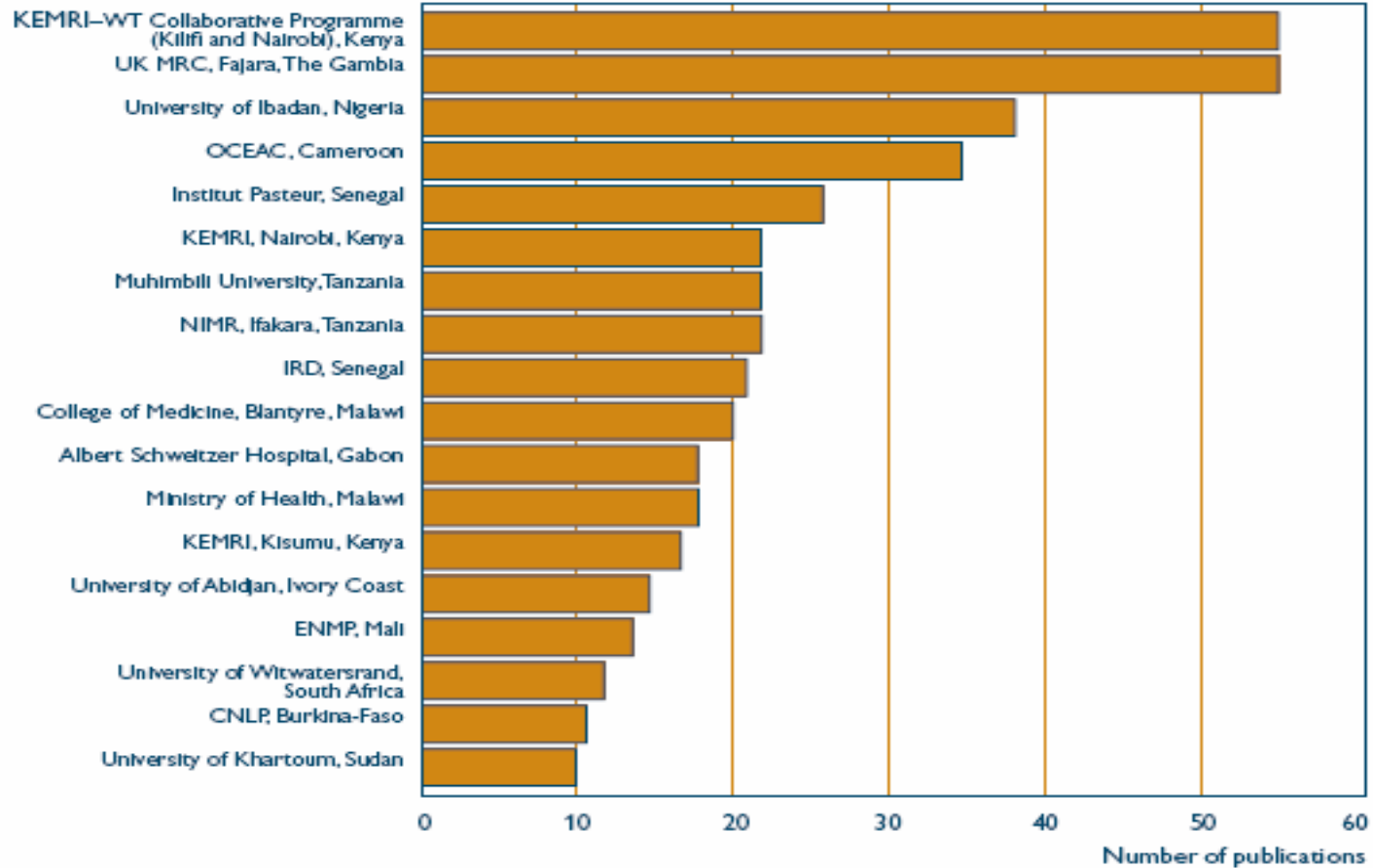
Background

- College of Medicine established 1991
- About 67% of 100 academic staff locals
- Course
 - Graduate: -MBBS, Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory Technology
 - Postgraduate: MPH, MMed
- High quality research in Research affiliates
 - Malawi-Liverpool-Wellcome Trust (Malaria)
 - Johns Hopkins Project (HIV/AIDS)
 - Malaria Alert Centre (Malaria)
 - Blantyre Malaria Project (Malaria)
 - Mostly driven by foreign researchers
- Limited research in departments hence need for capacity building
- Predominantly clinical research

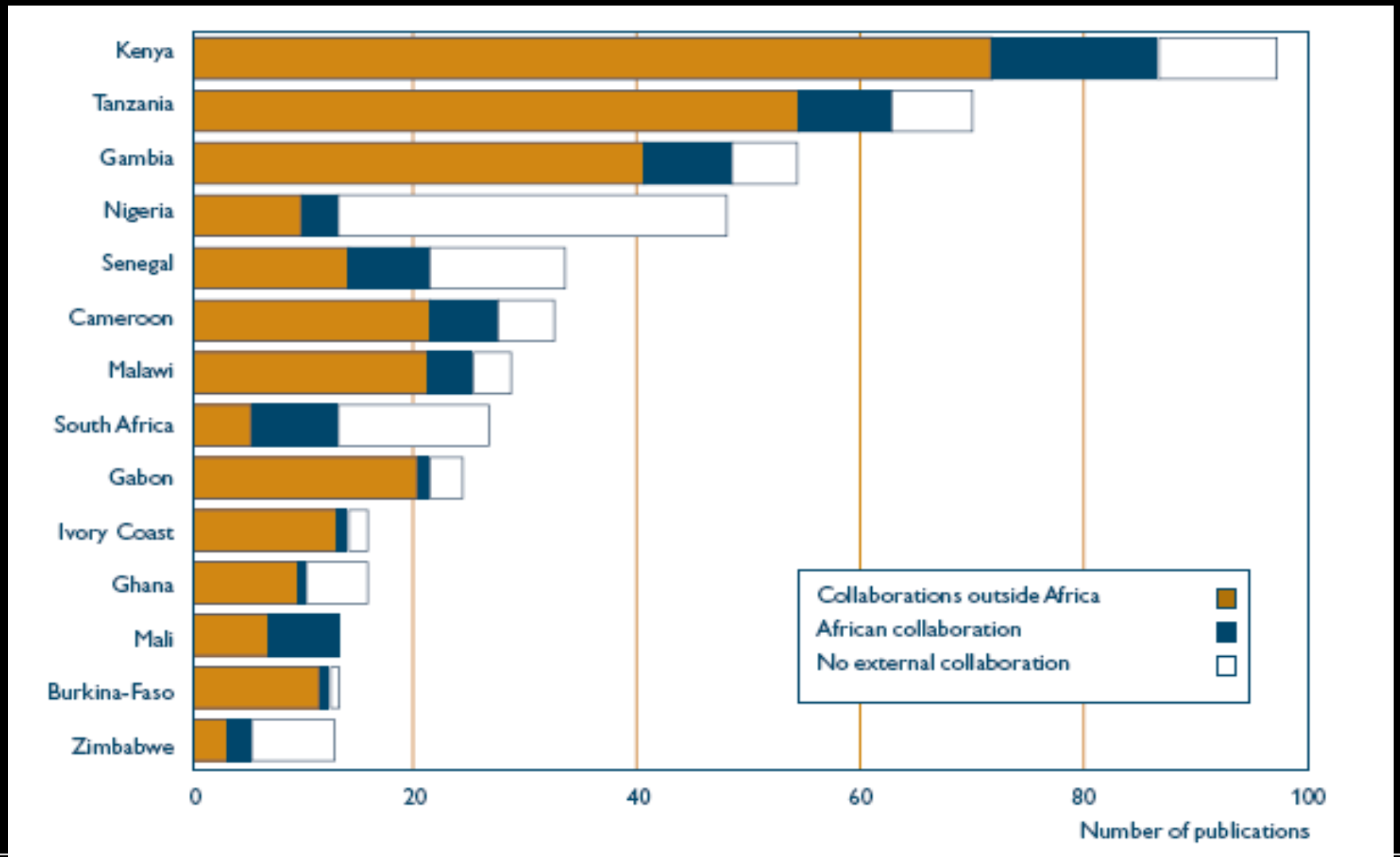
Top African countries publishing in malaria research 1995–97



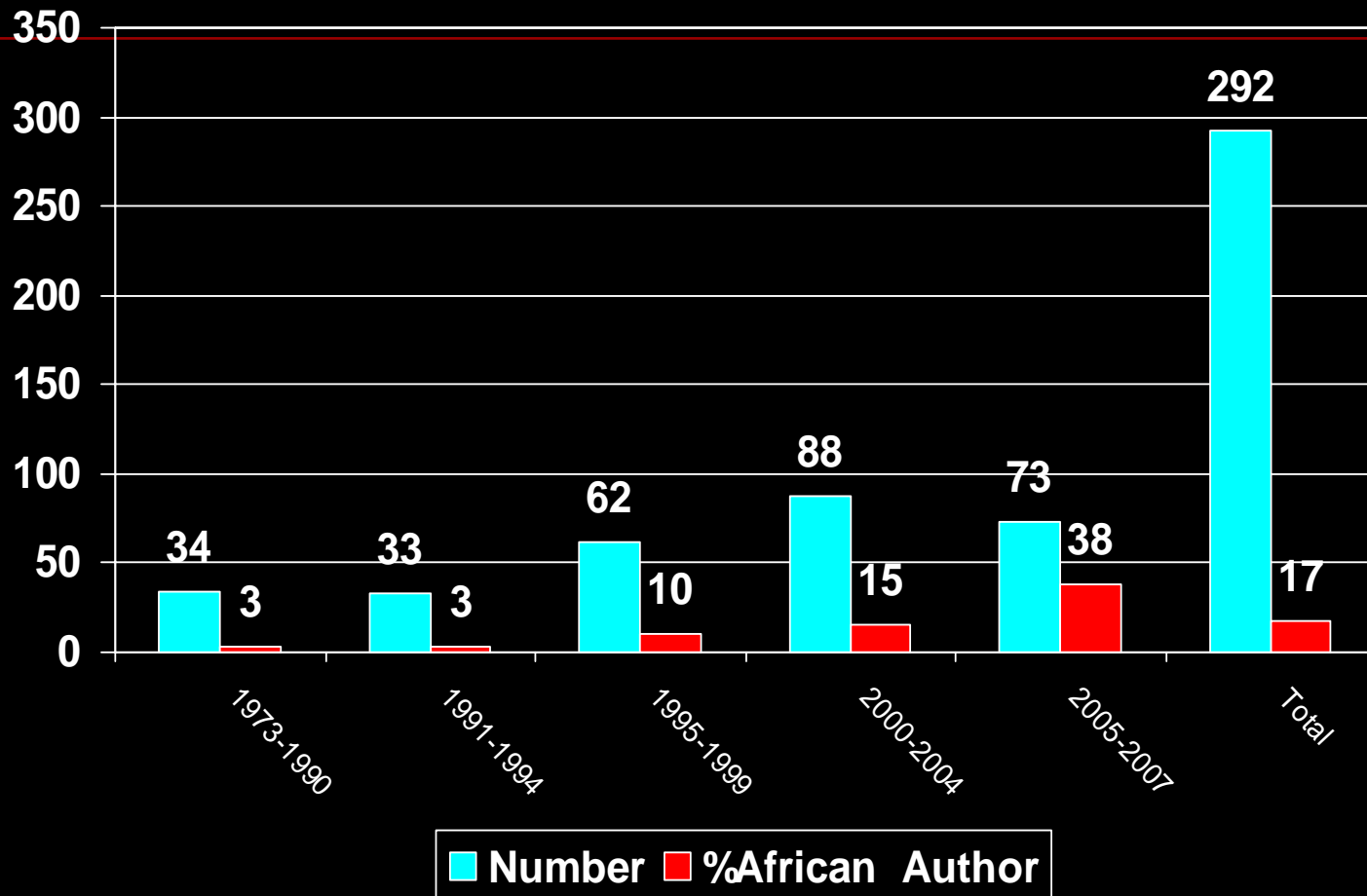
Highest publishing malaria research centres in Africa, 1995–97



Collaborations of African countries in malaria research 1995–97 (SCI)



Number of Malaria Research Publications Malawi - Medline 1973-2007



Malaria Research Strengthening Initiatives at CoM 1991-2000

- 43% of 134 MBBS graduates received postgraduate training abroad in various discipline
 - Clinical medicine, epidemiology, pharmacology, pathology
- PhD – 7
- MPH/MSc – 14
- MRCP etc – 20
- Other -16

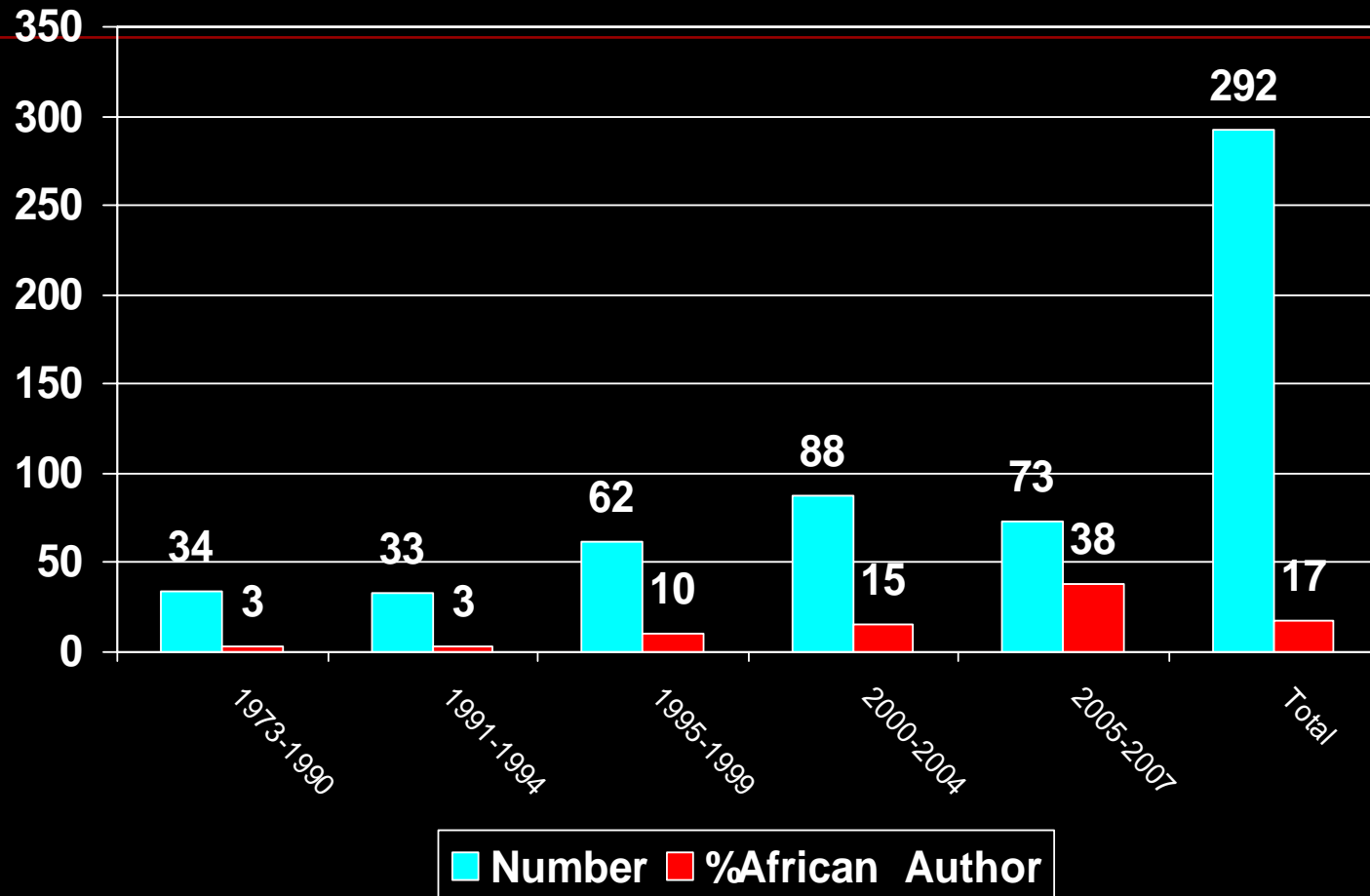


Malaria Research Strengthening Initiatives at CoM 2001-2005

- Gates Malaria Partnership – Malaria Research Capacity strengthening 2001-2005
 - 9 PhDs completed by 2007
 - 6 MSc, Diploma, Other
 - Diverse malaria topics
 - Prophylaxis, Drug resistance, Vector biology, Pathogenesis, Immunology, Adolescent malaria
 - Increased publication
 - Impact on health care delivery
 - Re-entry grants



Number of Malaria Research Publications Malawi - Medline 1973-2007





Lessons Learnt

- Researcher driven strengthening
 - fragmented and does not necessarily address institutional needs and priorities
 - No institutionalized recognition of achievement and hence career advancement
 - Limited utilization of skills development in
 - applying results due to lack of institutionally backed communication with policy makers
 - Creation of an appropriate environment for conduct of research
 - Reproduction of local capacity



Lessons Learnt

- Need for an institutionally driven and coordinated research capability strengthening programme that address sustainability of motivation and reproduction of local capacity
- Creating an enabling and supportive research environment for development of local research capacity and leadership is critical for sustainability



Institutionalization of Research Management at CoM

- Creation of an enabling environment requires institutionalisation of research management to interface individual driven skills development and institutional research support environment.
- CoM established Research Management Function in Office of Postgraduate Studies and Research
- Tasks
 - Implementation of Research Policy
 - Coordination of research activities
 - Designing programme of research training courses



Institutionalization of Research Management at CoM

- Individualised research support
- Introducing ICH-GCP and providing clinical monitoring services
- Providing research information services
- Grants administration – comprehensive support for researchers
- Provide data management services



Achievements

- RSC established 2006
- Staff
 - Director, epidemiologist/statistician, CRA (3), Data Manager, Data Officer, Administrative assistant, Finance Officer
- Courses implemented
 - GCP (4 courses) – 40+ research staff trained including senior scientists
 - Grant writing (1)
- Courses developed and planned for 2007
 - Clinical Trial Methodology
 - Basic Research methodology
 - Data Management
 - Clinical Trial Monitoring
 - Writing a scientific manuscript



Achievements

- Coordination of research strengthening efforts
 - Involvement of RSC in capacity building grant applications
 - Participation of RSC in strategic planning for research capability strengthening
 - Facilitation of development of research governance – draft research policy
 - Support for junior researchers in developing and submitting grant applications
- Clinical Trial Monitoring
 - 2 full time CRAs and 1 part time intern CRA
 - Monitoring two clinical trials
 - Continued training of CRAs - identifying internationally recognised trainers
- Information services
 - Website www.medcol.mw/rsc
- Strengthening research governance



Challenges

- Researcher apathy
- Fear of change
- Fear of responsibility
- Perceived to increase bureaucracy
- Fear of loss of position and income
- Fear oh the unknown



Discussion & Conclusions

- Institutionalising research management
 - provides more a comprehensive research training and support programme
 - ensures sustainability through institutional commitment and support
 - Enhances institutional capacity for grants administration, an essential function for research capability strengthening
- Sustainable research capability strengthening is dependent on an appropriate and supportive research governance framework and institutional mechanisms for research management
- Research capability strengthening grants in specific disciplines must include support for research management capacity development
- Research institutions should adopt a business approach to research
- Building bridges between individual and institutional efforts to strengthen research in Africa is key to sustainability



Acknowledgements

- EDCTP
- NACCAP
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- NACCAP