

Research capacity building with mycetoma as the central research challenge

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Prof Sir Brian Greenwood
Editor in Chief
Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene
Northumberland House, 303-306 High Holborn
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Dear Sir,

Research capacity building with mycetoma as the central research challenge.

The *Lancet* Commission on the future of health in sub-Saharan Africa concluded that Africa's research transformation will only happen through investment, collaboration and partnerships¹. Here, we describe the research capacity building partnership developed between the Mycetoma Research Centre in Khartoum, Sudan, and the Centre for Global Health Research at Brighton & Sussex Medical School (BSMS), UK. This partnership, supported by the BSMS-NIHR Global Health Research Unit (GHRU) on Neglected Tropical Diseases and the NIHR RIGHT-funded 5S Foundation, uses the multidisciplinary, translational model originally used to study podoconiosis², another highly neglected tropical condition, and applies this to the conundrum that is mycetoma³.

With the Mycetoma Research Centre already strongly equipped to carry out clinical and laboratory research⁴, our partnership has deployed approaches less frequently used in Sudan, including geospatial analysis, health economics and medical anthropology. Three GHRU PhD students are currently nearing the end of their training, and two more will be trained through the 5S Foundation, which will bring a range of social science perspectives to bear on mycetoma. UK-based trainees will benefit from exposure to an institution founded on a passion to serve patients⁵.

Alongside capacity building of research academics, this partnership also emphasizes wider capacity building in research support, through parallel training in research management, financial processes, and impact, communications and engagement. While it is hoped that this broad-based approach will bring benefit relatively rapidly to the Mycetoma Research Centre, the longer term aims of the partnership are that enduring in-country expertise is nurtured across a range of research skills and disciplines. For this, patience combined with vision within the partnership, and a stable external funding environment will be essential.

Yours faithfully,

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