

EDITORIAL

The COECSA research repository

We would like to introduce to you the proposed College of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (COECSA) Research Repository, a digital archive that will contain various research papers done in the Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (ECSA) region, with a particular focus on Masters' theses. There are several medical training institutions in the ECSA region that train a good number of ophthalmologists; it can be estimated that an average of 20-30 individuals graduate each year. These fresh ophthalmologists carry out various research projects as a requirement for graduation. Even though most of their thesis work is brilliant, very little of this work gets a peer reviewed publication. A brief visit to any of these universities will quickly confirm that most of the dissertations end up on university library shelves collecting dust and are therefore not readily accessible for use within and without the region. Often times, young researchers simply mention "*no literature available*" when asked to look up local literature on a particular subject. This is rather unfortunate as the information in these research papers is vital to residents who are still in training and those in practice.

Local literature is invaluable in understanding the disease dynamics in a local setting and greatly contributes to patient care and policy. It is essential that even as we review published works in various regions, we also look at the work that has been done locally. This will improve the knowledge available on the burden of eye care conditions in our region, provide an avenue for international researchers to access local data and in general get the information out there so that effective evidence based interventions can be carried out where

necessary. It will also be easier to understand areas where more research is needed.

We seek to contribute to solving this problem with the COECSA research repository which will make literature from the ophthalmologists working in the region, readily available and usable. Starting with the University of Nairobi and Mbarara University of Science and Technology, we shall systematically collect all masters' theses available in the department libraries and index them to: name of author, year, title, key words, abstract and PDF downloads in an open access format. By simply searching the database, anyone will be able to access this information and even contact the authors of the study if they so wish. We shall then scale this to all other institutions within the ECSA region.

This will be a valuable tool because it will make the information more accessible both locally and internationally. The repository will be continually growing, and completing residents will be requested to provide PDF versions of their dissertations to update it. COECSA enables continuing professional development in the region and encourages research to thrive and this is one more step towards that goal. We are excited to partner with you in making this a reality and call upon your support.

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