

Letter to Editor

## Interdisciplinary Collaborative Reproductive Health Research in Africa: A Team Science Approach

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During the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Africa Interdisciplinary Health Conference (AfIHC) on transforming healthcare through interdisciplinary collaboration, researchers had the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with a global network of colleagues while engaging with researchers from across Africa.[1] The virtual conference provided an opportunity for educators, clinicians, administrators, policymakers, researchers and specialists to interact and establish connections.[1] As demonstrated during the AfIHC, interdisciplinary collaboration is recognized as a vital component of the conduct of research and providing healthcare.[2]

In the spirit of the interdisciplinary collaboration promoted at the AfIHC, the Center for International Reproductive Health Training at the University of Michigan (CIRHT-UM), partners with educational institutions in low-income countries to strengthen human resources for effective family planning (FP) and comprehensive abortion care (CAC) along with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). [3] From 2018-2020, CIRHT-UM focused on pre-service education and providing trainings and workshops focused on FP and CAC for faculty, residents and trainees at University of Rwanda School of Nursing and Midwifery (UR-SONM) and Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology (OBGYN) in the Medical and Pharmacy School.

Now, we have the opportunity to work with UR-SONM and OBGYN again on a research capacity strengthening initiative.

Through our collaboration, in line with the objectives of the AfIHC, we hope to support the expansion of research capacity in Rwanda for FP, CAC, and SRHR.

Based on results of a research gap analysis, CIRHT-UM will support training faculty, residents, trainees, and reproductive health providers at UR facilities and partner clinical institutions on the research lifecycle, from research question to final publication and presentation of results. CIRHT-UM will also award competitive seed grants in FP/CAC/SRHR and foster inter-institutional networking among African researchers through conferences and information sharing. Our Pre-Publication Support Service (PREPSS) provides training and follow-up support for writing and publishing scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals. [4] Within CIRHT-UM programs, south-south collaborations are encouraged, fostered, and viewed as important as north-south collaborative efforts.

Interdisciplinary collaboration has the capacity to improve healthcare and build new knowledge. Our goal, over the next two years is to develop interdisciplinary collaborations incorporating team science involving partners in Rwanda from the SONM, OBGYN department,

and School of Public Health, as well as the Rwanda Biomedical Centre and policymakers, through reproductive health research projects and trainings. CIRHT-UM initiatives share the desire of the AfIHC to promote interdisciplinary education for improved healthcare in Africa and beyond.

### Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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