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Executive Summary

Introduction

I would like to welcome you to our 2021 Annual Report. The past year has had its own share of challenges, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, we are glad to report that we have equally scored a number of successes.

As you may already be aware, COECSA is one of the 8 constituent colleges of ECSA CHS, under the ECSA Health Community, with currently 12 member countries.

Unlike most professional colleges, the “O” in COECSA represents Ophthalmology not Ophthalmologists. This is important for our vision and mission.

Our Vision is: “Eye Health for all in Eastern Central and Southern Africa.” To achieve the Universal eye health coverage- leaving no one behind, we need to have a strong Eye health pyramid starting from PEC workers, Mid-level Ophthalmic personnel all the way to the Ophthalmologists.

Our focus is to set standards for Ophthalmology training and practice in the region. The aim is to harmonize Professional training in ophthalmology across the region and have the same final product across the current 15 Specialist training Institutions (in 12 countries) as well as the future training Centers.

We have the tools and the platform to achieve this in the near future.

Report Highlights

Education and Accreditation: In its continued efforts to contribute towards development of human resource for health, through quality training in ophthalmology, the College will soon unveil five (5) new accredited ophthalmology training centers.

Further, despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, that resulted in suspension of the COECSA Fellowship Examinations the previous year, the College has this year successfully conducted its exams with over 20 candidates applying to sit for the exams.

The work to develop three (3) Super-specialty Curricula was successfully completed this year. Moreover, this year, a total of 94 candidates were awarded the COECSA Foundation Fellowship during the awards and graduation ceremony held on the side-lines of the 2021 Congress.

Scientific and Research: COECSA 8th Annual Congress was held virtually on the 19-21 August, 2021, with over 600 delegates from 14 countries across the region and beyond attending.

The College has also supported research projects by providing grants management services.

Membership: In 2021, the College admitted 46 new Fellows from across the ECSA region. Fifteen (15) of the new Fellows were those who sat and passed the 2019 COECSA Fellowship exams, while 31 Fellows were admitted through the Fellowship by Peer Review process.

Partnerships: We have continued to work closely with our partners from the region, and beyond. This has resulted in the strengthening of eye health systems and service delivery in our member countries.

Finance: COECSA’s expenditure on programmes has significantly reduced in 2021, mainly due to the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The pandemic greatly hampered the implementation of some College programmes and project activities, especially those that required travel and physical attendance. This has since resulted in a great shift in terms of programme expenditure.

Gratitude

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all our stakeholders and partners for their continued support to our work. I am also grateful to our College Council, the Executive, the Senate, our Secretariat Team and the entire COECSA membership for all the hard work and support.

Enjoy the reading.

Dr. John Nkurikiye
President

Timely, Affordable & Sustainable Eye Care for All
Scaling Up Ophthalmic Training Opportunities in ECSA

In our continued efforts to contribute towards development of human resource for health, through quality training in ophthalmology, the College of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (COECSA) has accredited five (5) new ophthalmology training centres.

This follows a comprehensive 1 year long accreditation process involving over 15 institutions that had applied for accreditation, from across the Eastern, Central & Southern Africa (ECSA) region. The institution applied after an open call for expression of interest was sent out to registered training institutions/centres in the region, wishing to be accredited and partner with COECSA in the implementation of one (1) or more of the available training programmes.

The four (4) training programmes that were advertised for accreditation are;

1) Residency Training Programme
2) Glaucoma Super-Specialty Training Programme
3) Vitreo Retina Super-Specialty Training Programme
4) Pediatrics & Strabismus Super Specialty Training Programme

Virtual Site Accreditation
Due to the challenges brought about by Covid-19, among them travel restrictions, it became increasingly difficult to conduct the physical site evaluation visits. Therefore, the college devised other innovative ways to conduct virtual site evaluation, which involved training of the accreditation teams in virtual accreditation techniques.

Therefore, a capacity building pre-accreditation training was successfully held in May, 2021, thanks to Prof. Karl Golnik, a medical education expert who conducted the training. A total of 20 participants from across the region participated in the virtual accreditation training.
Scaling Up Ophthalmic Training Opportunities in ECSA

New Accredited Sites
After a successful accreditation process, the College has awarded Provisional accreditation to the following five (5) training centres:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF INSTITUTION</th>
<th>PROGRAMME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH)</td>
<td>Pediatric &amp; Strabismus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Super-Specialty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Eye Hospital</td>
<td>VR Super-specialty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ienwek Eye Hospital</td>
<td>VR Super-Specialty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Bulawayo Hospitals</td>
<td>Residency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital (MIRH)</td>
<td>Residency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The College believes the opening of new training centers will ensure that quality Ophthalmology training is easily accessible and available within the region. It will further greatly contribute towards reducing the challenge of extended periods of specialist’s absence due to long periods of training abroad. This will ultimately enhance availability and provision of quality eye care services in ECSA.

We wish to extend our gratitude to all the institutions that showed willingness to partner with COECSA in this regard. We further thank our partners who have supported this process especially the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and the Commonwealth Eye Health Consortium (CEHC), through the LINKS Programme.

The five (5) new training sites are in addition to the already accredited Rwanda International Institute of Ophthalmology (RIIO) training in collaboration with Innovation Eye Centre.
Fellowship Exams amidst Covid-19

Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, that resulted in suspension of the COECSA Fellowship Examinations the previous year, the College has this year successfully conducted it’s exams.

The 2021 Fellowship Exams that were preceded by a training of Examiners in the management of exams, were hosted by Addis Ababa University (AAU) at Menelik II Hospital, Addis, Ethiopia in October, 2021.

The examiners training was conducted using mixed teaching methods (physical and online). This presented an opportunity for examiners who were unable to travel to Addis Ababa to also participate in the training workshop. The training included background information on COECSA training, examination, and exam materials. Clear instructions were given on the purpose and how to conduct fellowship exams. Exam materials were reviewed, and sufficient time allocated for discussion, questions, and answers.

The Exams attracted over 21 candidates from across the ECSA region, that included Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Uganda, as well as others from Zimbabwe and Rwanda.

The purpose of this examination is to examine candidates who have completed their postgraduate training in ophthalmology and wish to become fellows of COECSA, with all attendant benefits. The examination tests the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired by the candidates. It is designed to be as relevant, objective and stringent as possible.

COECSA is grateful to the host for this year’s Exams (Addis Ababa University), to the Exams Coordinators and Examiners both local and foreign, and all our partners for the continued support.

The next COECSA Fellowship exams are scheduled to take place in September, 2022, preceding the Scientific Congress in Lilongwe, Malawi.

Foundation Fellowship
In 2018, a resolution was passed by both the College Council to adopt the ICO written exams for the time being, and the implementation calendar was drafted.

Thus, for candidates to receive the COECSA Foundation fellowship Part 1A and Part 1B, everyone who sat and Passed ICO Visual Sciences and/or Optics and Refraction from March 2019 onwards was requested to submit his/her ICO confirmation certificate to COECSA for the award.

This year, a total of 94 candidates were awarded the COECSA Foundation Fellowship during the awards and graduation ceremony held on the side-lines of the 2021 Congress.
Curriculum Development: Three (3) Super-specialty Curricula Developed

The work to develop three (3) Super-specialty Curricula was successfully completed this year. The curricula developed are:

i) Glaucoma Super-specialty Curriculum
ii) Vitreo-Retina Super-specialty Curriculum
iii) Paediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus Super-specialty Curriculum

Following the validation and approval of the curricula by the Senate, over 100 copies of each of the curricula were printed. Part of the hardcopies were submitted to Regulatory Authorities/Medical Boards in the region as well as accredited training centres.

Moreover, in order to make the curricula easily accessible across the region and beyond, the College has developed an online curricula portal. Aside from the super-specialty curricula, the online version of COECSA Residency Curricula was also migrated to the portal.

Curriculum Consultative Meetings

As part of the curriculum development process, a number of stakeholders meetings were held. Curricula Consultative meetings: two curriculum consultative meetings were held. The first was in Nairobi, Kenya at which a total of 21 (9M, 12F) participants, from the three specialty communities of practice attended. The second meeting was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania attended by 18 members of the subspecialty communities from across the region as well as COECSA Secretariat Staff.

A curriculum sensitization meeting for Training Institutions and National Regulatory Authorities was held in Kigali, Rwanda with over 20 participants in attendance. The meeting brought together training institutions and national regulatory bodies from across the ECSA region with the goal to foster partnership between COECSA, governments and training institutions in the implementation of the super-specialty training programmes in the region.
Train The Trainers (TTT)

In order to address the unmet need for educators in the member countries to become better teachers, the College has developed plans to scale up the implementation of a comprehensive Train the Trainer (TTT) program. The program will incorporate the principles of adult learning that trains on optimum methods in teaching, learning and tracking the competencies outlined in the COECSA Curricula.

The ultimate goal of the TTT is to enhance knowledge and strengthen the technical capacity of ophthalmic trainers to implement the COECSA Curricula in general and in particular the use of training assessment tools. This will enhance standardization and quality of training across the region.

Additionally, the TTT will serve the following specific objectives:

- To ensure that education offered by ophthalmic educators meets the needs of ophthalmology residents, subspecialty fellows and those that are pursuing career long continuing education.
- To familiarize educators in the region with the proposed improvements in the methodology of teaching by incorporating new and more effective methods into ophthalmic education.
- To promote the understanding and sharing of knowledge on the COECSA curricula, including the utilization of the tools for tracking learning using the assessment tools that are part of the curriculum.

It is thus expected that this will result in real changes in residency programs including new methods of instruction, assessment of resident skills, and incorporation of curriculum based education. Further, it is hoped that training institutions in member countries will adopt and utilize the COECSA curricula for residents and subspecialists, as it offers a framework for the training process and training of eye care providers at all levels. Further, through the TTT, COECSA will effectively and efficiently distribute useful education tools and information to ophthalmic educators.
The 8th COECSA Congress 2021 successfully held virtually

COECSA 8th Annual Congress was held virtually on the 19-21 August, 2021, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This was driven largely by the ban on international travel and conferences as the pandemic hit the African continent that called for alternative means of delivering on our activities.

The congress was held under the theme, “Beyond VISION2020 –Timely, Affordable and Quality Eyecare for all” and was attended by over 600 participates. Dr Stephen Gichuhi delivered the first key note address entitled “Vision Beyond 2020” while the second key note address was by Dr. David Yortson.

The conference brought together a diverse range of stakeholders from COECSA member countries and beyond, including senior Ministry of Health officials, fellows, members, residents, associates and heads of ophthalmology training institutions as well as diverse collaborating partners in the region and beyond.

In spite of the challenge posed by the pandemic, COECSA Research Committee under the leadership of Dr Kazim Dhalla did an excellent work to see a successful congress that was graced by the Cabinet Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Health -Kenya, Dr. Mercy Mwangangi, (CBS) as the chief guest.

Some Key highlights from the 8th Annual Scientific Congress include;
◆ Over 600 delegates in attendance at the Congress from 14 countries
◆ 12 trade delegates exhibited their products at the congress
◆ 46 Fellows admitted into COECSA membership
◆ 2 best resident research awards issued
◆ The best and first runner up COECSA Fellowship awarded, prizes given courtesy of Appasamy Associates

The 9th COECSA Congress is scheduled for the 21-23 September 2022 in Lilongwe Malawi, to be hosted by the Ophthalmology Society of Malawi.
Research Support

COECSA has continued to support evidence based practice in eye health and research that advances the practice of Ophthalmology in the East, Central & Southern Africa region.

This year, COECSA has supported research projects by providing grants management services. In this regard, three research grant projects are being implemented currently:

i) Multi-Modal Electronic Database with Retinal Imaging & Clinical Data from the African population;
ii) PEEK Practice-Based Evidence Framework project.
iii) 'The Occlu-Tab Therapy for Amblyopia Treatment in the Kenyan Setting' is a study that will be carried out at P.C.E.A Kikuyu Hospital and Kenyatta National Hospital. A one-time grant from the “Basic Research on the Occlu-pad tablet optometry device to restore eyesight of Kenyan children with low vision” has been provided. This is funded by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan

JOECSA

The Journal of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (JOECSA) is the official journal of the College of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (COECSA) with a current subscribed membership of over 500. JOECSA is an open access journal, published in English in hard and soft copy formats and is dedicated to all aspects of ophthalmology and community eye health.

This peer-reviewed scientific journal publishes research papers contributing towards new knowledge in eye care, prevention of blindness and poverty eradication efforts relevant to Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. JOECSA’s broad objective is to produce a high quality, regular, self-sustaining, peer reviewed ophthalmic journal which will increase local and international visibility and citation of ophthalmic research from the Eastern and central African Region.

JOECSA is a fully open access journal, providing authors with a distinctive new online submission and interactive review service on its recently improved portal:

https://joecka.coeca.org/index.php/joecka/about/submissions
46 New Fellows admitted to the College

In 2021, the College admitted 46 new Fellows from across the ECSA region.

Fifteen (15) of the new Fellows were those who sat and passed the 2019 COECSA Fellowship exams.

Further, 31 Fellows were admitted through the Fellowship by Peer Review process. This follows a decision by the Council to admit senior Ophthalmologists that graduated before 2009, from selected countries that did not have the opportunity to do so at inception.

The new Fellows admitted by peer review in 2021 included:
- 7 from Ethiopia
- 2 from Malawi
- 4 from Mozambique
- 4 from Zambia
- 14 from Zimbabwe

This year's Graduation and Awards ceremony was held as a hybrid - both virtually and physical attendance.

Among the key benefits of being a COECSA Fellow/Member are:
- Access to monthly CMEs in the country chapters
- Discounted registration rates for the annual Scientific congresses.
- Access to digital copies of the college bi-annual scientific journal, JOECSA with links to related articles.
- Listing and promotions of members’ practice
- Receive targeted news and invitations to events of importance to the members
- Free access to the online CPD portal.
- Participation in COECSA sponsored CPD activities across the region
- Sponsorship and subsidized fees for trainings as and when available
Regional Partnerships

COECSA has continued to participate actively in regional and international initiatives. Key highlights of these include:

- Membership to International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) — COECSA formally joined the IAPB family in 2020 as a category C member.
- COECSA is a constituent member college of the East Central & Southern Africa -College of Health Sciences (ECSA CHS) and actively champions the collegiate training model in the ECSA member states.
- COECSA chairs the ECSA Health Community (ECSA – HC) Experts Committee on Eye Health. Together with IAPB, COECSA was instrumental in the formation of the Experts Committee on Eye Health that advises the ECSA HC Director’s Joint Consultative Committee and Secretariat on technical and policy issues on eye health. The Experts’ Committee also plays a role in implementing resolutions made at the Health Ministers’ Conference and guiding member states.

Project Partnerships

- Sightsavers and Light for the World International are supporting the Health Systems Strengthening Project (HSS) which aims to contribute to avoidable blindness prevention through health system strengthening in eye health training and practice in ECSA.
- The Common Wealth Eye Health Consortium (CFHC) through the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) supported the Sub-Specialty Training Capacity Building Project, whose aim was to build local capacity for quality subspeciality ophthalmology training in ECSA region.
- PEEK /Welcome Trust Fund are supporting the Practice Based-Evidence Framework Project. The aim of the project is to develop an easy-to-use, real-time, data-driven system that helps programme managers identify which groups are being left behind and provide rapid tools for engaging them.
- MODRIA Project is funded by MUDSREH NIH grant with the goal to use a multimodal database of clinical and retinal imaging data to develop algorithms and integrate the ophthalmic imaging function into normal clinic operations in Uganda and Kenya.
**LINK partnership**

Since 2008, the RCOpht has been in a VISION 2020 LINK partnership with COECSA, working together towards raising standards of knowledge and practice in eye care in the region.

In 2008, the goals of the College-College LINK partnership were to enhance ophthalmology training and build human resource capacity across the COECSA countries through:

- developing Fellowship examinations
- examiner training
- standardising the curriculum in training colleges
- ECSA
- developing continuing professional development (CPD)
- developing subspecialty training in the region
- developing mentoring.

The goals of the LINK partnership are in parallel with the third Sustainable Development Goal - good health and well-being.

The intention of the LINK has always been to help COECSA realise its full potential to co-ordinate high quality training in the region and oversee the highest standards of practice.

Since 2008, COECSA has grown and now encompasses 12 countries - Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Ethiopia, Zambia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Somalia and Mozambique - who have benefitted greatly from the LINKS partnership.

The LINK between the two Colleges has evolved over the years, always responding to the needs expressed by COECSA and working together to address them. The commitment of the RCOpht over many years has been instrumental in helping to improve the quality of ophthalmology training and research in sub-Saharan Africa.

Through this LINK, more people are being prevented from losing their sight unnecessarily. It is a true partnership that has involved many people offering what they can to the partnership.

COECSA is grateful to RCOpht and all the individuals, trusts, companies and foundations who have made charitable donations towards the LINKS partnership.
Impact Reflections

IMPROVED SURGICAL SKILLS THROUGH HBTs
(Reflection by Dr. Shaffi Mdala, Malawi)

Dr Priscilla Mhango performing trabeculectomy surgery under the supervision of Dr Shaffi Mdala

Lions Sight First Eye Hospital (LSFEH) in Blantyre, Malawi benefited from the Hospital-Based Trainings (HBT) sessions that were implemented at the hospital between 2019 and December, 2021. The HBTs were implemented under the COECSA/Orbis HReH Project.

Three intensive one-week HBTs were implemented at LSFEH over the period. The 2021 HBT was a follow-up training to a glaucoma HBT which was also delivered at the same facility earlier by Dr Sheila Marco. The HBT focus was on teaching trabeculectomy and Ahmed valve surgery to the local ophthalmologists and residents, as well as Paediatric Ophthalmology. It also covered management of challenging glaucoma cases (particularly in patients who had no success with a trabeculectomy surgery) and management of childhood glaucoma. The local trainees were taught on how to perform Ahmed valve surgeries in the absence of donor heart/scleral tissue required for the procedure.

This training was found to be very valuable considering that LSFEH does not have local access to the donor tissue, although there are patients who do need an Ahmed valve implantation surgery. Moreover, the general feedback from the trainees was that it was easy to learn from the trainers because the trainers had a good understanding of the relevant issues in the service delivery context at LSFEH. Secondly, trainees reported having a good training experience because the right type of instruments and consumables were made available for each HBT week. This was so because prior to each HBT, the trainer was consulted on the detailed list of appropriate resources which would be required for the HBT. Another reason for the good training experience was the good case selection for the HBTs. In this regard, patients who were operated on during the HBTs were selected in consultation with the trainers ahead of the training week.

The HBTs implemented were indeed a great means of capacity building for Malawian ophthalmologists. The greatest impact has been in glaucoma surgeries, with a total of 5 ophthalmologists now being able to perform glaucoma surgeries independently following the HBTs. In addition, four ophthalmologists were oriented to paediatric cataract surgery, one of whom (Dr Misanjio) has continued to be mentored closely by Dr Msukwa and is at an advanced stage towards acquiring independence in paediatric cataract surgeries. Other key highlights from the HBTs include:

♦ collectively, 136 Trabeculectomy surgeries were performed in adults.
♦ 11 Ahmed valve surgeries were performed in adults.
♦ 4 paediatric glaucoma surgeries and 7 paediatric cataract surgeries were performed by the HBT trainees following the HBTs.

All in all, there is need for more HBTs to be arranged to help local ophthalmologists to continue acquisition of surgical skills in paediatric cataract, paediatric glaucoma and later squint (strabismus). Currently, although there is a paediatric ophthalmologist at LSFEH, his routine time is taken more by service delivery, being the only paediatric ophthalmologist for the country. Thus, the country is in need of improving surgical services and HBTs offer an opportunity for ophthalmologists to acquire the necessary skills in a more focused and intensive manner, which allows for a lot of learning within a short time.

Thanks to COECSA and Orbis for the support!
RESIDENCY TRAINING: Elective Term at Kisii
(Reflected by RIO PGY1 students who spent their first two months elective term at Kisii Eye Hospital, Kenya where they covered physiology, optics and refraction as part of the COECSA/RIO Residency Training Program.)

"I liked the learning arrangement in Kisii Eye Hospital. It’s a one-on-one apprenticeship, the ideal way of studying medicine”, - Dr. Rebecca

"Dr. Rebecca Lusaka Namweyi (Kenya)

"The environment at Kisii eye hospital has been warm, welcoming and the patients have been friendly and cooperative. We have been able to do a lot of procedures and the learning curve has been steep. We appreciate all that the hospital has offered us”, - Dr. Vincent

"Kisii is a busy eye hospital that receives a great variety of pathologies. As a resident, it has been a great opportunity to gain exposure and be challenged by the clinical picture and try to relate to the literature. I appreciated also the consultative diagnostic approach between the refraction unit and the ophthalmologist, for the better management and patient satisfaction”, - Dr. Olivier

"Dr. Uwizeye Olivier (Rwanda)
Presidents Awards 2021

This year’s COECSA President’s award categories included Professional Achievements and International recognition awards.

Professional Achievement Awards were presented to the following new PHD graduates:
- Dr. Simon Arunga (Uganda)
- Dr Hilary Rono (Kenya)
- Dr Nyawira Mwangi (Kenya)
- Dr Furahini Godfrey (Tanzania)
- Dr Esmael Ali Habtamu (Ethiopia)
- Dr. Kangwa Ichengelo Mulenga Muma (Zambia)

Further, the President awarded international recognition awards to:
- Prof Ciku Mathenge - Among 100 most influential women in Ophthalmology 2021 and IAPB Vision Excellency Award
- Prof. Dunera Ilako Daniel - IAPB Vision Excellency Award
- Prof. Danny Kiage - IAPB Vision Excellency Award

The President also awarded Dr. Kazim Dhalla, the Scientific and Research Committee Chairperson for the commitment to the College and hard work.

Congress Awards 2021

The 2021 Scientific Congress award for the Best Resident Abstract was presented to Dr. Raheel Kanji from Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST).

Congress awards were also presented to the following sponsors:
- The Premier Sponsor - FLDV Rwanda
- Platinum Sponsors - Novartis and Bayer
- Silver Sponsor - Peek Vision
- Ivory Sponsors - Help me see, Aurolab, Medimport, Iridex, U I Inc and Allergan
- Special sponsors - Ajanta Pharma and Appasamy

Dr. Simon Arunga (Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda) receiving the 2021 Presidents Award for new PHD Graduates
Programme Expenditure

COECSA’s expenditure on programmes has significantly reduced in 2021, mainly due the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The pandemic greatly hampered the implementation of some College programmes and project activities, especially those that require travel and physical attendance. This has since resulted in a great shift in terms of programme expenditure percentages as per graphs inserted.

From an average annual expenditure of around USD630,000.00 the previous years, the organisation spent USD251,655.50 on programmes 2021.

Of the expenditure in 2021, 32% went towards Human Resource Development compared to 42% the previous year (2020).

12% went towards Promotion of evidence based policy and Practice Research, compared to above 30% the previous years.

Moreover, 6% went to Leadership and HREH Advocacy, while 50% went to Organisation Strengthening compared to 19% the previous year (2020).