**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA CENTRE FOR EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS**

**AND POLICY (UGCES)**

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| **COLLABORATING INSTITUTES**1. School of Public Health, University of Ghana, Legon
2. Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons (GCPS), Accra
3. Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR)
4. West African Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens (WACCBIP)
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**WORKSHOP: ADVANCING INNOVATIVE, EVIDENCE-INFORMED, DEMAND-DRIVEN AND POLICY-RELEVANT RESEARCH IN AFRICA THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING IN EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS**

**20-24TH MAY 2019, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, ACCRA**

**RATIONALE**

Naturally, every doctor wants to choose the treatment that will lead to the best possible outcome for the patient. The scientific community also wants to avoid redundant research because it misleads and wastes the available funds for relevant research. Wastage is of particular concern in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) where funds for research is limited. Systematic review – evidence synthesis- generates the best (overall) evidence needed to inform sound decisions and policies, and in developed countries systematically synthesized evidence is used to inform all policy decisions, even new research. Systematic reviews pool all relevant studies and distil evidence at the highest level possible using an explicit, transparent, reproducible, methodical and comprehensive approach to search for studies, extract and analyze data, and critically assess risk of bias (quality) of each of the studies included in the review. Evidence synthesis, started in the area of medicine, now has application in almost every discipline including social sciences, biological sciences, education, information systems, agriculture, outbreak investigation, climate change and disasters. Increasingly, policy makers and healthcare providers, even patients, in low and middle-income countries (LIMCs) are demanding quality evidence to inform their decisions and choices. However, the capacity to undertake rigorous or evidence-based research, informed by systematic reviews, is limited, particularly in Africa. At best, decision makers in LMICs are forced to rely on evidence generated in developed countries that does not necessarily apply to their setting, situation or context. This capacity building workshop titled “***Evidence Synthesis for Advancing Innovative, Evidence-Informed, Demand-Driven And Policy-Relevant Research For Strengthening Health Systems And Improving Patient Outcomes In Africa”***,organized for TIBA partners across Africawill stimulate interest and passion and equip participants with the essential skills and knowledge about gold standard approaches needed to be competitive, globally; help increase the capacity in generating more research topics with high relevance; and create critical mass of early career researchers and next generation scientists conscious of quality-driven and policy-relevant research. TIBA can tap into this initiative to collaboratively win more grants and partnerships and develop a resource group of trainers who will ensure that the best research evidence is produced and used to inform sound policy decisions and guidelines across Africa.

**UGCES’S OVERALL GOAL**

To build critical mass of African scientists and institutions including Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs, mid-career scientists, next generation scientists, PhD and post-doctoral students, university lecturers, health professionals in decision-making levels and policy makers for health systems strengthening and effective healthcare delivery that will improve patient outcomes in Africa, and to advance innovative, evidence-informed, demand-driven and policy-relevant research in Africa.

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

UGCES specific objectives are to:

* Create critical mass of TIBA members and leadership in evidence synthesis who will in turn support others in innovative research driven by quality, and increase output of systematic review publications across TIBA core areas
* Increase the capacity of TIBA members to undertake rigorous and reliable research, applying evidence synthesis skills
* Train TIBA members and leadership at the highest level of innovative research that will transform their research and make them competitive globally
* Train participants on how to prepare systematic reviews (quantitative and qualitative reviews) and rapid reviews and to integrate the evidence in their decision making or for publication in a peer-reviewed journal
* Train participants in basic economic concepts and principles and how to incorporate economic evidence into systematic reviews to guide cost-effectiveness policies

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the workshop participants should be able to:

* Follow the systematic review process and demonstrate key abilities in conducting at least one systematic review within two years, with further support from facilitators
* Recognize the similarities and differences in the approaches to synthesizing different types of evidence (e.g. clinical effectiveness, diagnostic test accuracy, qualitative as well as non-medical evidence)
* Use the Cochrane Software (RevMan) to prepare a systematic review protocol for grant application or full systematic review for publication
* Apply systematic review knowledge and skills to conduct reliable research
* Transfer knowledge and skills acquired to the mentoring of early career researchers and next generation scientists
* Integrate economic evidence in cost-effectiveness reviews

**COURSE OUTLINE**

The workshop comprises both theory and hands-on activities and will be delivered using theory-grounded and problem-based learning approaches, following the outline below:

* Introduction to the value of systematic review and meta-analysis
* A detailed description of what systematic review is, the systematic review process and the strengths and limitations of systematic reviews
* Formulating the review question and developing the review protocol
* Step-by-step guidance on how to perform a systematic review and meta-analysis and rapid review, emphasizing on the practicalities often encountered

The workshop teaches the practical skills needed to conduct systematic reviews and to foster evidence-informed decision making in public health. Participants will be guided to select a topic of high relevance and formulate an appropriate review question using **PICOS** - to define the following: P = Population/participants/patients, I = Intervention, C = Comparison/comparator/control, O = Outcome of interest and S = Study design. Participants will have an opportunity to engage in very interesting hands-on exercises such as how to develop search terms, build search concepts and apply the concepts built to search electronic databases such as PubMed (MEDLINE) and EMBASE to retrieve literature, as well as how to use standard systematic review software (e.g. RevMan) to prepare and report a systematic review. Participants will go through the whole systematic review process and complete the workshop with a review protocol which will be further developed after the workshop into a full systematic review manuscript to be submitted for publication in scientific journals and which should go on to inform policy and practice.

**TARGET PARTICIPANTS**

Participation in this particular workshop is restricted to Principal Investigators (PIs), Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs), mid-career scientists or policy makers from TIBA-partner countries involved in designing, implementing and evaluating strategies to improve health outcomes in Africa. TIBA-partners from Africa include Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Participants from two other countries (Malawi and Zambia) have been selected to attend the workshop at the request of the UK National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), which is funding TIBA. TIBA members from countries outside Africa such as the UK have been allowed to attend the workshop. We hope to run further workshops for next generation scientists, PhD and post-doctoral students, university lecturers, health professionals in decision-making levels and policy makers working in Africa.

**ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THE WORKSHOP**

It is anticipated that TIBA partners who attend the workshop will be sensitized to the value of systematic review and start using systematic reviews evidence to inform/guide all their decisions to help accelerate outcomes improvement across countries in Africa.

**LONG-TERM AMBITIONS**

To build critical mass of African scientists, health professionals and policy makers in the gold standard approaches and tools now used by the international community, and to advance innovative, evidence-informed and policy-relevant research that will strengthen evidence-based healthcare delivery across countries of Africa.

**FACILITATORS**

# The workshop will be delivered by experts with long standing experience in Evidence Synthesis from the University of Ghana Centre for Evidence Synthesis (UGCES) and leading Institutions from Europe, America and Asia. The UGCES is a member of the Global Evidence Synthesis Initiative (GESI) Network.

**RESOURCES NEEDED**

# It is advisable for participants to bring a laptop. Resources for further study and research will be provided.

**LOCATION**

The workshop will be held at the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

* *Workshop dates*: **20-24th May** **2019, 9am-5pm each day**
* *Deadline for submission of application forms*: **Sunday 24th March 2019, 11pm GMT**
* *Notification to successful applicants*: **31st March 2019**
* *Acknowledgment of acceptance by applicants: 1***2th April 2019**

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