

Title: Graduate supervision at Makerere University College of Health Sciences

Authors: JK Byamugisha¹, Y Nsubuga, S Kagwa, P Ongom¹, S Kiguli¹, HM Mayanja¹, J Hallock²

Context and setting: Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS) serves as a strong training hub not only for the East African region but also for and beyond Africa. MakCHS has clinical and public health departments. Each graduate student gets at least two supervisors. Recently doctoral and undergraduate studies have received more focus than master degree students.

Why the idea or change was necessary: The number of graduate students at Makerere University College of Health Sciences has trebled in the last two decades. There are indicators that there are challenges with the quality of graduate (postgraduate) research and clinical supervision. This has resulted in delay in handing in of dissertations, decreased student satisfaction with supervision and decreased patient satisfaction. There is also reduced respect of seniors by recent graduates.

What was done: The project started with a survey. Consecutive sampling was done for the graduates and purposive sampling for the current graduate students. We obtained views from recent (post qualification and previous year) graduates using web-based questionnaires designed using SurveyMonkey. The questions included a simple grading scale of 1 to 5 that had questions about different aspects of supervision. Two focus group discussions were each conducted in surgery and Obstetrics/Gynecology departments. We included all the continuing graduate students in the survey. Those involved in the Focus Group Discussions were excluded from the web-based survey.

The FGDs were recorded, data was transcribed, analyzed and categories, subthemes and themes identified. Method and data triangulation were done. The total number of participants from the two departments was 52.

Satisfaction with graduate research supervision was at 50% and 40% strongly agreeing and agreeing respectively while for clinical supervision only 10% agree. The 60% were not satisfied with the clinical supervision support. The research guidelines are not very easily accessible.

The survey findings are guiding an intervention on faculty development program aimed at improving supervision of post-graduates. This is in the form of Continuous Professional Development about supervision, assessment, policies and guidelines for graduate training. Moments during senior staff and school board meetings are utilized.

Evaluation of the results and impact: From our findings: the graduates are satisfied with research and not clinical supervision. Retreats, senior staff meetings and other appropriate fora should regularly be utilised to discuss student feedback reports and share ways forward for improvement. Senior doctors need to continuously be available in the clinical areas to ensure satisfactory supervision. Research guidelines need circulated in both soft and hard copies to students and faculty.

¹School of Medicine Makerere University, ²Faimer Institute in Philadelphia (USA)