

Merck Foundation continues training oncologists in Africa to combat emerging cancer crisis

With the aim to increase the number of oncologists in Africa, Merck Foundation will continue the second stage of their Africa Oncology fellowship Programme. According to a white paper on the continent's emerging cancer crisis, released by Bio Ventures for Global Health (BVGH), and the African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer (Aortic), more than 20% of African countries have no access to cancer treatments at all, while access is limited and sporadic in other countries, and later stage diagnosis in African patients contributes to poorer survival rates.

Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation emphasised: “One of the main objectives of Merck Foundation is to build a strong platform of qualified medical, paediatric and surgical oncologists across the continent through the Merck Africa Oncology Fellowship Programme.”

“Twenty candidates from Uganda, Zambia, Ethiopia, Namibia, Ghana, South Africa, Botswana, Liberia, Tanzania, and Kenya have enrolled in the Merck Africa Oncology Fellowship Programme in partnership with African Ministries of Health, the University of Nairobi, Kenya, Tata Memorial Centre, India, and Cairo University, Egypt. We are very proud of our contribution, to lead Africa to a better future through changing the landscape of cancer care in the continent.”

In partnership with Ministries of Health and Academia across Africa, the Merck Africa Oncology Fellowship Programme provides one-year and two-year oncology fellowship programmes and a three-year master degree in medical oncology at

Tata Memorial Centre, India, University of Nairobi, Kenya, University of Malaya, Malaysia, and Cairo University, Egypt, respectively.

Launched in 2016, three medical doctors from sub-Saharan African countries Kenya, and South Africa were granted a two-year Africa medical oncology fellowship training at the University of Nairobi. Also, Merck Foundation supported another two African doctors from Ghana and Tanzania for the Paediatric and Adult.

In 2017, Merck Foundation partnered with more African countries such as Rwanda, Liberia, Zambia, Ethiopia, Botswana and Uganda to provide ten candidates with the one-year oncology fellowship programme in India and three candidates from Liberia, Ghana and Namibia to conduct a master degree in clinical oncology at Cairo University, Egypt.

“ Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation with the future oncologists of Africa who are currently under training at the Tata Memorial Centre in Mumbai. pic.twitter.com/sWaiRe1fLG— Merck Foundation (@MerckFoundation) [May 8, 2018](#) ”

Enrolling more candidates to improve quality and accessibility of cancer care in Africa

“In 2018, We will continue to enrol more candidates and engage other countries on this programme as we firmly believe this is a vital component of improving the quality and accessibility of cancer care in Africa. We have received requests from countries such as; Niger, guinea, Gambia, the Central African Republic to partner with them through their First Ladies' offices and Ministries of Health to provide our fellowship program to their doctors with the aim to improve access to quality cancer care in their countries and across the continent. Merck Foundation will continue their long-term commitment to further partner with more Sub-Saharan African Countries to realize their vision to create a strong platform of future trained oncologists “, Rasha Kelej added.

The partnership between Merck Foundation and The African First ladies' organisation has been established in Jan 2018, to cooperate in building healthcare capacity with the special focus on cancer, diabetes and fertility care in their countries with the support of their Ministries of Health.

Merck Foundation has supported the African governments to define their strategies, to emphasize on building professional capacity and focus on long-term training, with the aim to develop trained oncologists and not only relying on drug or equipment donation, which will help them to be independent and would overcome their major challenge, which is the lack of skilled oncologists and healthcare professionals in general.

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