

# **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ONCOLOGY RESEARCH IN SUB SAHARAN AFRICA THROUGH CLINICAL TRIALS: THE INTERNATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE EXPERIENCE.**

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## **Context**

Approximately 50% of the global disease burden resides in the African continent. Studies conducted in the region show that various factors including change in lifestyle and longer life expectancies have caused an alarming increase in cancer cases. This necessitates an expansion of oncology research capacity, with emphasis on the identification of potentially effective drugs and vaccines in a genetically diverse region through clinical trials. While previously the region has been dismissed as lacking in resources such as effective ethics boards, trained researchers and unfavorable political environment to effectively and successfully clinical trials, various stakeholders have taken a front lead to de-mystify this. The International Cancer Institute in Eldoret Kenya, sought to establish an oncology clinical trials unit in order to lead efforts in advocating for excellence in oncology research in Sub Saharan Africa as one of the premier oncology clinical research centers in Kenya and in the region.

## **Process**

Established in 2019, the International Cancer Institute Clinical Research Center is one of the departments within the Office of Research that coordinates the clinical trials activities at ICI. Over time, the department has been equipped with the required resources including dedicated personnel in the research management and regulatory affairs, quality assurance and control, research pharmacy, research data management, participant recruitment and retention coordination and clinical research departments. These departments work synergistically to ensure the safe conduct of clinical trials activities within the institute. The Research Center has fully set up governing structures and systems that ensure clinical trials activities are conducted in a safe, effective and timely manner within the ICH-GCP standards and applicable local as well as international regulations.

## **Outcome**

Since its inception, the center has been selected to conduct 13 clinical trials. Out of these, 4 have been initiated at the site and 2 clinical trials closed out successfully. 9 other clinical trials are at various stages of regulatory approval. 11 trials are phase III studies, while 2 are phase II. Plans are underway to conduct early phase clinical trials.

## **Conclusion**

Health system strengthening through building research capacity is possible in Sub-Saharan Africa . Despite challenges facing globalization of oncology clinical trials, concerted efforts and stakeholder involvement can improve the region's ability to participate in development of evidenced based oncology therapies contextualized to the region's population.