

Mentoring African Medical Scientists

Lead academies: African Academy of Sciences (AAS) and Kenya National Academy of Sciences (KNAS)

The project, 'Capacity Building through Mentoring of African Scientists by Indian, Brazilian and Chinese Scientists in Cell Biology/Regenerative Medicine' is being implemented by the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), the Kenya National Academy of Sciences (KNAS) and the Indian National Science Academy (INSA).

The goal of the project is to build capacity in Africa in cell biology and/or regenerative medicine by establishing mentee/mentor relationships between African scientists, below the age of 45, with distinguished scientists from India, Brazil and China.

The programme was initiated at a 2013 workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, on the theme 'Capacity Building in Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine'. A second workshop, 'Training and Mentoring African Scientists in Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine Research', funded by IAP, was held from 4-6 August 2014, again in Nairobi. This workshop consisted two days' of lectures and a day devoted to demonstrations and hands-on practical work. There were 33 attendees, including 15 young scientists who were able to interact with accomplished experts in the field. These included Dorairajan Balasubramanian from the L.V. Prasad Eye Institute, India; José Garcia Abreu and Fabio Almeida Mendes from the Institute of Biomedical Sciences, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Anjali Shiras from the National Centre for Cell Sciences, India; Omu Anzala, KAVI Institute of Clinical Research at the University of Nairobi, Kenya; Susan H. Kidson, University of Cape Town, South Africa; Venant Tchokonte-Nana, Stellenbosch University, South Africa; and Hiba BadrEldin Khalil Ahmed from Al Neelain University, Sudan.

A key outcome of the workshop was the identification of early career scholars to take part in the mentorship training phase of the programme during 2015. The selection of the mentees and placement in specialized laboratories was based on their areas of research interest and mentor-mentee interactions during the workshop.

Two mentees will go to India, one at the National Centre for Cell Sciences (NCCS), Pune, and the other at the L.V. Prasad Eye Institute in Hyderabad, while three others will receive training at the Institute of Biomedical Sciences of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In addition one candidate will spend time at the Institute for Cellular and Molecular Medicine, University of Pretoria, South Africa; and another will be trained in anatomy and histology at the Islet Research Laboratory, Stellenbosch University.

AAS is now exploring the possibility of holding a third workshop, in collaboration with the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), and intends to build on its initial successes of this mentorship programme.



Young African scientists receiving practical training thanks to the 'Capacity Building in Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology' project led by the Kenya National Academy of Science and the African Academy of Sciences.