



Editorial

Celebrating 15 years of Pan African Thoracic Society Methods in Epidemiological Clinical and Operations Research: Research capacity building changing African lives

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Research capacity building is a process of developing sustainable abilities and skills that enable individuals and organizations to perform high-quality research.^[1] At the individual level, it involves training and erudition in research design, conduct, write up, and publication of findings that inform policy and improve lives. Research output has the potential for greatest impact when conducted by researchers who understand the exigencies that exist in the local context. Such knowledge and understanding are best developed through residence, experience, and establishment of linkages within that society.

Research capacity building that focuses on the training of researchers to conduct research in their local communities brings about the prioritization of local health needs. Such research promotes health equity, drives evidence-based practice, improves population health, and directs policy.^[2] The huge research capacity gap in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is famed and efforts has been made by many organizations to change this paradigm.^[3] However, sustainability which is underpinned by the ability of the beneficiaries to take ownership of the program remains a challenge.

The Pan African Thoracic Society Methods in Epidemiological Clinical and Operations Research (PATS MECOR) program is a research capacity building program in Africa that has met the prerequisites for success and has indeed been successful. Starting in 2007, it has endured for 15 years with measurable successes that range from publications, to leadership positions, policy changes, advocacy, and improvement in evidence-based clinical practices. Some of these achievements are exemplified in this issue of the Journal of the Pan Africa Thoracic Society (JPATS).^[4-6] More broadly the PATS MECOR program has facilitated a seat at the table for African researchers to engage in high-level discussions and utilize the opportunity to project African health issues as global health issues. The PATS MECOR program has also served as a pathway for higher educational achievements among participants and has contributed to the increase in the number of experts within the continent. More so, with the current coronavirus 2019 pandemic and the growing recognition of the adverse health impacts of climate change, there is a dire need for African experts to address African-related issues.

This issue of JPATS celebrates the PATS MECOR program and spotlights some of its successes. As a past student of the program myself, I attest to the immense contribution PATS MECOR had on my career success, and grateful for the opportunity it still affords me now as faculty and co-director to continue to contribute to the development of future generations of researchers

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and leaders. The editorial by Gordon *et al.* in this issue of JPATS shows that indeed, we are standing on the shoulders of giants. It also illustrates some of the approaches that have contributed to the success of the program.^[4] On behalf of myself and co-director, Refiloe Masekela, we thank all past and present faculty and students of PATS MECOR. We recognize that without you and your hard work there is no celebration. This issue of JPATS rightly celebrates you!

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