



News | October 2024

The IHCOR-Africa newsletter is produced thrice a year with the aim of informing members, partners and collaborators about activities, events, and progress on the project. It is also used to disseminate new developments and findings in the field of hypertension in rural Africa.

IHCOR-Africa Online Training

IHCOR-Africa's online courses continue to provide invaluable training in hypertension research and research methodologies for researchers across sub-Saharan Africa. These courses cover key topics such as an introduction to hypertension research, along with the fundamentals of epidemiology, biostatistics, health systems, and clinical trials as used in hypertension research. In January 2024, we welcomed 67 applicants from 17 countries across the region to participate in the 2024 training cohort.

**Courses taught so far:**

- Introduction to Hypertension
- Research
- Fundamentals of Epidemiology
- Biostatistics
- Health Systems
- Clinical Trials

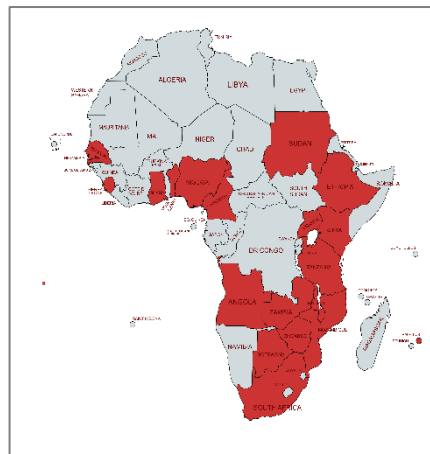
Cohorts so far: 2023 and 2024 cohorts

Participants taught so far: 127

To date, we have successfully delivered three out of the four courses planned for this year. The most recent course, held in September 2024, focused on the Fundamentals of Health Systems and attracted 28 participants. The course objectives were to help students understand the concept of a “health system” and the various frameworks for analysing and describing them; describe the core functions of health systems and their significance; and critically reflect on methods of measuring and researching health systems. All these concepts were explored through the lens of hypertension research and management.

The course was taught by a panel of professors who are experts in health systems research. The course included recorded lectures and reading material that participants can study during the week, and live practical sessions designed to foster critical thinking, with participants engaging in discussions based on assigned readings. The practical sessions were then followed by a Q&A and plenary session to further explore and reinforce key concepts.

Looking ahead, we will be selecting another 25-30 participants from the original 67 applicants for our next course on **Clinical Trials**, which is set to begin in early 2025.



Countries represented

Selected Publications and News from IHCoR-Africa Group Members

1. Mugo R, Pliakas T, Kamano J, Sanga LA, Nolte E, Gasparrini A, Barasa E, Etyang A, Perel P. **Evaluating the implementation of the Primary Health Integrated Care Project for Chronic Conditions: a cohort study from Kenya.** BMJ Public Health. 2024 Mar 26;2(1):e000146. doi: 10.1136/bmjph-2023-000146. PMID: 38939473; PMCID: PMC7616119.



2. Diallo BA, Hassan S, Kagwanja N, Oyando R, Badjie J, Mumba N, Prentice AM, Perel P, Etyang A, Nolte E, Tsofa B; IHCoR-Africa Collaborators. **Managing hypertension in rural Gambia and Kenya: Protocol for a qualitative study exploring the experiences of patients, health care workers, and decision-makers.** NIHR Open Res. 2024 Aug 19;4:5. doi: 10.3310/nihropenres.13523.3. PMID: 39238902; PMCID: PMC11375402.



3. Alexander Perkins has been selected as a 2024 WHF Emerging Leader and participated in the WHF Think Tank Seminar in Mombasa, held from October 27th to November 1st. <https://world-heart-federation.org/emerging-leaders/>

4. Prof. Anthony Etyang, Prof. Pablo Perel, Prof. Elijah Ogola, and Dr. Lilian Mbau participated in a seminar entitled "Advancing Cardiovascular Health in Africa: The Role of Implementation Research, Challenges, and Priorities," organized by the Kenya Cardiac Society and the World Heart Federation (WHF) in Mombasa on October 30th.



5. Anthony Etyang, **Clinical Research Pathways in Africa** participated in a workshop in October in Nairobi that was organized by the African Academy of Sciences and Academy of Medical Sciences (UK). The main objectives of the workshop were to convene researchers, policy makers and wider stakeholders together with multi-sectoral expertise to explore how institutions can support and strengthen sustainable and locally embedded career pathways for clinical research in Africa.

IHCoR Activities



IHCoR Ideas Club

The IHCoR Ideas Club is an initiative that allows team members to share topics of interest, preliminary findings from research activities, or relevant updates from related fields and disciplines in a relaxed and open setting. It fosters knowledge exchange, encourages collaboration, and serves as a platform for promoting curiosity and discussing innovative ideas. Below is a summary of some of the presentations held in 2024. Recordings of presentations are available.



Date	Topic
19th January	“Diagnostic Performance of Office and Home Blood Pressure Measurements Conducted by Community Health Workers” highlighting the accuracy and reliability of various blood pressure monitoring methods.
9th February	“Improving Implementation of Innovations in CVD Prevention: The Implement-CVD Study” insights on patient capacity and the workload of hypertension-related demands were discussed.
10th April	“Roles and Potential for Involvement of Community Health Promoters in the Management of Hypertension at the Primary Health Care Level.”
12th May	“Infection and Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)” explored the connections between infectious diseases and cardiovascular health, shedding light on emerging research in this area.
14th June	After attending the European Society of Hypertension, team members presented a summary of the most interesting talks, including key insights on “Blood Pressure Measurement.”
13th September	“You Can Either Get or Miss the Service That Brought You: Applying an Access Framework to Understand Patient Journeys in Accessing Hypertension Care in Rural Coastal Kenya” , explored barriers and facilitators to hypertension care access in rural settings.

IHCoR-Africa’s Community Engagement and Involvement



On July 29 a community meeting was held in Kemoto, Kiang West, The Gambia. During the meeting the general perception of the planned IHCoR-Africa study activities was discussed with 19 community members. Participants raised concerns that were noted and addressed by the study team. The IHCoR team in The Gambia was joined by colleagues from Kenya Juliet Odhiambo, Catherine Kalu and Boniface Karia who had travelled to The Gambia for cross-learning and to hold collaborative meetings.



Juliet Odhiambo, joined by Catherine Kalu and Boniface Karia from Kilifi, Kenya making a presentation in The Gambia to the IHCOR team

Stakeholder workshops in The Gambia



On July 8th and August 2nd workshops with various stakeholders to co-design a community centred intervention to be implemented to improve the management of hypertension in rural Gambia were held. Attendees included national and regional level decision-makers, NCD partners, health facility managers, health care providers, clinicians, community health nurses, individuals living with hypertension, family caregivers, and village health workers. Participants emphasized the necessity for improved awareness of hypertension. Community-based screening was proposed as an effective strategy to enhance awareness and diagnosis of hypertension in rural areas. Appropriate training strategies to equip village health workers with the requisite knowledge and skills to support hypertension control efforts was found to be essential.

Emphasis was placed on combination therapy, given its superior efficacy in treating hypertension and reducing pill burden. Participants expressed concerns regarding the consistent supply of medications and emphasized the importance of improving supply chain management. They also highlighted the necessity of training nurses and pharmacy assistants in drug dispensation. Participants further identified several antihypertensive

drugs that would be more appropriate for consideration. They also elucidated which healthcare cadre should administer specific antihypertensive drugs and at which level of healthcare delivery, as well as how patients should be monitored following their initial prescriptions and where within the healthcare delivery system.



An IHCoR Community Engagement Event In Kenya below



IHCoR-IDeAL funded research leadership training



IHCoR-Africa in collaboration with the Initiative to Develop African Research Leaders (IDeAL), based at the KEMRI – Wellcome Trust Research Programme (KWTRP) in Kenya held a research leadership training workshop for final year PhD students, Career Development Year fellows and Postdocs from 1-4 October 2024 at the KWTRP Kilifi campus. The workshop brought together 21 participants from Pwani University, Strathmore University and KWTRP. The training that focused on mentorship, leadership and grant writing was facilitated by Prof. Assan Jaye from MRC Gambia.



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Collaborating institutions



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