

UK and Zambian pharmacists: improving pharmacy practice, education and research by working together

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This study did not require ethics approval

Context and Problem

The Brighton-Lusaka Health Link (BLHL) is a non-profit organisation established in 2005, aiming to empower Zambian and UK-based health care professionals with an overall goal of improving healthcare in Zambia. Past joint projects have linked nursing and anaesthetics teams in the two countries. As pharmacy practice and education are evolving globally, there is an opportunity for pharmacists from low and high income settings to share best practices and develop capacity to address current and emerging pharmaceutical care needs. This led, in 2016, to pharmacists from UK and Zambia becoming involved in the BLHL.

Intervention

In order to develop areas for collaboration, scoping visits of one week were undertaken by pharmacists from Brighton and Lusaka. A visit by 6 UK pharmacists to Lusaka, Zambia in April 2016 was followed by a reciprocal visit by 5 Zambian pharmacists to Brighton, UK in October 2017. Programmes for the visits were comprehensive and included discussions with pharmacists from clinical practice, academia and various pharmacy professional bodies and opportunities to tour facilities.

Outcomes

As a result of the visits, a number of opportunities were identified including:

1. Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) practice and innovation

- AMS is a high priority for healthcare professionals at UTH, and there is opportunity to widen scope and capacity of existing Zambian AMS teams e.g. through piloting use of mobile apps to improve antimicrobial prescribing.

2. Academic Pharmacy

- AMS is not an integral part of the pharmacy curriculum at UNZA.

- Integrated undergraduate pharmacy curricula in the UK can support UNZA education strategy and underpin multi-professional learning and skills mix for pharmacy.

3. Hospital and clinical pharmacy practice

- 24-hour hospital pharmacy services are being implemented at UTH.
- Encourage and promote inter-professional teaching and learning
- Well-established specialist pharmacist roles in the NHS include accredited independent prescribing.
- Legislation to support pharmacist independent prescribing in Zambia has not been passed. Opportunities to improve prescribing practices are limited.
- Share, promote and develop pharmacy educational infrastructure and governance in practice.

4. Pharmacy research

- Opportunities to build research links identified include research collaborations; PhD co-supervision, bilateral research placements and collaboration with the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association (CPA).

Effects of changes

A number of projects have been agreed upon and initiated. These include:

- Evaluating the cost effectiveness of 24-hour pharmacy services. Data collection taking place and protocols exchanged.
- Piloting mobile apps for antimicrobial prescribing. Funding discussion are in place and progressing
- Collaborating with the CPA to carry out an AMS gap analysis
- Evaluating pharmacist interventions. Current methodologies used and outcomes have been exchanged. Planning in progress for simultaneous data collection and comparison of outcomes.
- Co-supervision of a PhD student at discussion stage
- Development of teaching materials for AMS at discussion stage

Conclusions

Collaboration between UK and Zambian pharmacists was successfully established via the Brighton-Lusaka Health Link. Scoping visits to Lusaka and to Brighton were a successful method of sharing best practices, seeing and experiencing what works well and how processes can be improved. Collaborative projects and activities being implemented are anticipated to improve AMS, education and bilateral research.

Word count: 500