

**SPEECH BY THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY MINISTRY
OF HEALTH DR. RASHID A. AMAN, ON THE 6TH KENYA MEDICAL
TRAINING COLLEGE SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE HELD AT THE
KMTC HEADQUARTERS, NAIROBI ON JUNE 2, 2021 AT 10:00 AM.**

Chief Administrative Secretary Dr. Mercy Mwangangi

KMTC Board of Directors

KMTC Chief Executive Officer Prof. Michael Kiptoo

Representatives of Government entities

Development Partners

Conference Committee and presenters

Faculty, Staff and Students

Online audience, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to speak at the opening of the 6th Scientific Conference of the Kenya Medical Training College, whose theme is '*Optimizing Training and Research towards Attainment of Universal Health Coverage in the wake of COVID – 19*'.

This forum is well-timed.

It is coming at an opportune time when the world is facing the ravaging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic is undoubtedly the greatest challenge (besides war) facing the world for more than 100 years, which includes the lifetime of the College.

This is why today's dialogue is very important.

On behalf of the Ministry of Health, I would like to commend KMTC for its invaluable efforts in supporting the Government in the war against this pandemic. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that now is the time for greater commitment and action towards achieving our mandate.

On the other hand, I recognise and congratulate the College for scaling-up research and development work in the country. I am extremely proud of the way the Staff, Students, and Alumni are stepping up to the challenge of research in the areas of health and training, among others.

We know that it is through research that the road to recovery from COVID-19 has been shaped. Thanks to research and development, we now have a vaccine against COVID-19. Similarly, the other interventions for control of COVID-19 are informed by evidence from research. This demonstrates the importance of research in all aspects of life, health care included. I commend our researchers for the active involvement in the search for a vaccine and its rollout.

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

Conferences such as this provide a valuable opportunity for researchers, healthcare workers, educators, administrators and policy-makers to share research findings and take stock of how far our health system, research and development have evolved over the years. The knowledge to be shared will facilitate development of practical and evidence-informed processes to address the different issues faced by our country. I commend KMTC on this occasion even as I note that this is the first ever virtual Scientific Conference to be held by the College.

A glance through the programme of the three-day conference reveals an array of high-level plenaries, panel discussions and presentations designed to share ideas on the subthemes of public health, education, family medicine, nutrition, non-communicable diseases and rehabilitation. These are important priority areas for our health system and programmes.

I note for example that the first plenary, which will be delivered by the Chief Administrative Secretary at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Mercy Mwangangi will be on ‘Our Health System and UHC: How does it affect our response to COVID 19?’. This is a session that will provoke dialogue and provide solutions to accelerate progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Kenya, as this remains a priority goal. The other five plenary sessions are equally vibrant, and will provoke stakeholders to accelerate progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and highlight some of our most pressing health challenges.

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

Majority of the 30+ presentations in this conference will be made by Students, Staff and Alumni of KMTC. I note that KMTC is investing in training and mentoring young researchers. This is commendable, as the country needs health

workers who understand and prioritize research, recognizing its centrality in health, education and development.

Some Alumni of the College hold key leadership and research roles in various institutions and this conference will provide a good opportunity for engagement and networking.

I also notice that besides the voice of the Alumni, we have the Student and patient voice in this conference. I am glad to see a patient having a chance to share their experience with the health system. It will be refreshing to hear the experience of a student and their research journey at the College. This is important, when we consider the priority given to patient-centred care and student-centred learning. It is an opportunity to understand the patient and student journey, and to empower them. I congratulate KMTC for this aspect of research leadership.

I recognize the rich diversity in the research represented in this conference. In particular, the studies have been conducted in 13 different counties of Kenya, which is a good geographical distribution. There is a good mix of observational and experimental study designs, quantitative and qualitative research, and the settings of the research varied from community-school-hospital and laboratory based studies. This diversity and variety reflects growth in research, and we hope to see more of this in the next conference.

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

Presenting research in areas of interest allows researchers and users of the research evidence such as policy-makers and the public to become aware of the innovative research being generated in health systems. As scientists, it is important that we share our research findings to increase their visibility and provide interested individuals with more information that may lead to positive

change in the sector. Conferences provide one such avenue of knowledge-sharing, and I urge you to take advantage of the opportunity.

Research funding is often a key barrier to research productivity. However, it gives me pleasure to report that the Kenyan Government has prioritized health research and development funding to achieve industrial renaissance, as outlined in the Vision 2030 Blue Print. We continue to create an enabling environment for research works to thrive.

Particularly, the Government has developed a robust policy framework for managing, coordinating, and funding research.

The National Research Fund under the Science and Technology Innovation Act, 2013 will facilitate research for the advancement of science, technology, and innovation. Under this framework, we allocate approximately 0.5 percent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to support research initiatives each financial year.

This is why we bank on the Ministry of Health's departments and Parastatals such as KMTC, as well as other partners to help us take research to the next level.

I want to challenge you to continue allocating more resources towards research, including research in medical education.

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

Creating an all-inclusive, accessible, and affordable healthcare services is a strategic priority shared not only by the Government of Kenya but also by the United Nations as a whole.

We particularly remain committed to achieving both national and international obligation - to promote the quality of lives of our citizens.

Kenya is a signatory to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and we remain committed to putting in place the necessary investments needed to realize the targets set under Goal 3: to ‘ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.’

The attainment of SDG3 is reinforced by the achievement of target 3.8 to ‘achieve Universal Health Coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.’

Universal Health Coverage is based on the principle that all individuals and communities should have access to quality essential health services without suffering financial hardship.

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

As we know, our country has set a clear roadmap towards achieving Universal Health Coverage, which remains steadfast even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. We know beyond doubt that even during times of uncertainty such as during a pandemic, Universal Health Coverage remains the best way to secure the health of all individuals and especially the health of the most vulnerable populations.

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

As I conclude, I would like to thank the organizers of this event and the KMTC Management Team for embracing technology and ensuring we have a successful conference despite the COVID 19 challenges.

I appreciate the Board of Directors for offering the strategic direction and spearheading the College’s recent expansions, making its presence felt within Kenya and beyond.

I thank the Ministry of Health, led by Cabinet Secretary Sen. Mutahi Kagwe, for providing leadership in ensuring health for Kenyans remains a priority at all times.

Lastly, I would like to thank H.E President Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta for offering direction to the country, and driving the economic social development blueprint through the Big Four Agenda, and more specifically Universal Health Coverage, to which the College is committed, through training of Human Resources for Health, research and consultancy services.

I wish you fruitful deliberations!

Asanteni!

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