

The Burden of Obstructive Lung Disease (BOLD) study prepares for African Surveys

A workshop was held to prepare African researchers to take part in the Burden of Obstructive Lung Disease (BOLD) study. Researchers came from all parts of the continent to the Kenyan Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) during the last week of November.

BOLD is designed to measure the prevalence and main risk factors for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The first phase of the study, co-ordinated from Portland, Oregon, was focused mostly on the advanced market economies. Two years ago its central co-ordination moved to Imperial College London, with funding from the Wellcome Trust, and the focus moved to low- and middle-income countries.

Recently there has been a growing realisation that chronic diseases pose a serious problem to low-income countries. This includes COPD which is expected to rise from the sixth to the third most common cause of death by 2020. There is, however, very little real local

evidence of the disease coming from low- and middle-income countries, and this is particularly true of Africa. The WHO non-communicable disease strategy for the Africa Region emphasises the need for local information on disease burden and risk factors and calls for specific baseline surveys where this is missing (see www.who.int for Report AFR/RC50/10 paragraph 24).

To date, the only site to complete the BOLD study in Africa is Cape Town, although three centres have started work in the Maghreb region – in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. At the Nairobi workshop, researchers were present from West, Central, Southern, and East Africa. The aim is to have good representation of all the regions defined by the Global Burden of Disease programme by the end of the project in three-and-a-half years time.

Training is focused on obtaining a very high standard of spirometry. This is difficult but essential for the BOLD programme. Other areas covered include drawing representative samples, administering standardised questionnaires, and the coding of information.

Prof. Peter Burney of Imperial College London who is co-ordinating the programme said, 'This was an excellent workshop. We clearly have very high quality researchers from all parts of Africa.' Dr Mpoke, Director of KEMRI, welcoming the participants, said, 'We are very happy to host this workshop. KEMRI and the Kenyan Ministry of Health take the problem of chronic lung disease very seriously as a threat to the nation's health.' Funding still needs to be found locally; although some areas have found industrial sponsors, this is much more difficult in low-income countries. A second training workshop for sub-Saharan Africa will be held in Nigeria in 2011.

For further information see: <http://www.boldstudy.org>.

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The BOLD Africa training workshop, KEMRI, November 2010. Ms Gnatiuc, Prof. Burney, Dr Jithoo (Imperial College, London), Dr Zinsou, Dr Feugap (Gabon), Dr Obaseki, Mr Awoniyi (Nigeria), Dr Akpabio, Dr Kabamba (Namibia), Dr Ong'ang'o, Dr Weyenga, Mr Gitonga, Mr Tomno (Kenya), Dr Kirenga (Uganda), Dr Amukoye, and Mrs Kendi (KEMRI)