



KINTAMPO HEALTH
RESEARCH CENTRE

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EDITION

KHRC FOCUS



MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER



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A MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH STUDY LED BY KHRC BENEFITS THOUSANDS OF WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE BELT OF GHANA

Thousands of pregnant women in over 80 communities in the Kintampo North Municipality and Kintampo South District of the Bono East Region of Ghana are receiving essential support through a maternal and child health study led by the Kintampo Health Research Centre (KHRC), with funding from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

As of December 2024, over 2,123 pregnant women had been enrolled in the study and benefitted from free ultrasound scans to check if their babies are healthy and growing well. These ultrasound scans are performed by midwives who have been trained and certified in ultrasound scanning through this study.

This maternal and child health study titled, "Antenatal, Intrapartum, and Postnatal Care: A Prospective, Longitudinal Study of Maternal and Newborn Health of the

Pregnancy Risk Stratification Innovation and Measurement Alliance," (PRISMA) gathers important information about the risks women face during pregnancy and how to make healthcare better for families in Ghana and other low- and middle-income countries.

The women who benefit from this PRISMA study also enjoy free medical and laboratory screening services including oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) for diagnosing gestational diabetic conditions, thyroid function test, kidney and liver function tests, and screening for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, bacterial vaginosis, among others.

Pregnant women would usually have to pay for these services, which are not part of the routine care provided at antenatal clinics at the health facilities. The PRISMA study therefore offers these services for free, reducing the financial burden families would

In addition to being trained as certified sonographers who perform scans for the women, the PRISMA study has equipped the midwives with the needed knowledge and skills to care for the pregnant women and their children ensuring better health

outcomes for them. The midwives monitor the health and wellbeing of the mothers and their babies and provide them with Postnatal Care (PNC) services at home. This ensures that they receive the essential care they need, especially in the first three days after delivery, even if they do not visit the health facility to access these services.

Mothers like 29-year-old *Ataa, are grateful for the support. She explained that “when I was told that I will get ultrasound scans and other lab tests for free, I could not believe it because I spent a lot of money to do these tests in my previous pregnancies.

The scans showed that my baby was healthy, and the midwife explained everything to me. They [researchers] also do many other tests that are not done in the hospitals, so I get to know a lot more about my pregnancy this time around. They told me they will continue to take care of me after I give birth to my baby, so I am really happy.”



The PRISMA study, which started in December 2022 and expected to end in December 2025, is supported by a passionate team of field and laboratory staff who work directly with the women within the communities. The continuous training and monthly refresher courses empower these field staff to relate well with study participants and gather the right data that will inform future healthcare improvements.

Through free services, better-trained midwives, and important data gathered, this study is improving lives and making healthcare stronger in the communities it serves.

Learn more about the PRISMA Study <https://www.kintampo-hrc.org/pages/adopt.html>



IMPROVING BLOOD PRESSURE CARE IN GHANA: OVER 13,000 PEOPLE SCREENED AND 300 COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS TRAINED THROUGH TASSH STUDY

In communities that once faced limited access to healthcare, over 13,000 individuals have now had their blood pressure screened, and 300 community health workers trained to identify and manage hypertension cases properly, thanks to the Uptake of Task-Shifting Strategy for Blood Pressure Control in Community Health Planning Services (TASSH) Project being implemented by the Kintampo Health Research Centre (KHRC) with funding from the National Institute of

For many community members, this simple act of screening marked the beginning of a journey toward better health. Among them is *Saida, a 45-year-old small-scale farmer

who discovered she had a dangerous level of high blood pressure. With timely intervention and care, her life took a healthier turn. Sadia’s story is one of many such life-changing stories of beneficiaries in Kintampo North, Kintampo South and Nkoranza North Districts, all in the Bono East Region of Ghana.

Among these life-changing stories are also 300 dedicated community health workers in the three (3) districts who have received training to properly screen and refer hypertension patients to specialists. These health workers, equipped with new skills and resources, are now pillars of support within their local communities.

“Before this training, I felt helpless when patients showed symptoms of hypertension,” says *Amankwa, a community health nurse in one of the project districts. “Now, I know exactly what to do with the right equipment available to me, and it’s very empowering.”

The impact of TASSH goes beyond individuals. Since the project’s inception in May 2017, Community-wide awareness about hypertension has shot up, rising from 43% to 80%. Conversations about blood pressure and healthy living are now common in homes, schools, and markets. This cultural shift is rooted in TASSH’s extensive outreach and education efforts, encouraging people to prioritize their health.

Strengthening primary healthcare systems has been at the heart of TASSH. Local facilities, once under-equipped, now have the logistics and tools needed for effective hypertension screening. This foundation

ensures that the progress made can continue for years to come.

Central to the project’s sustainability is a training manual created for frontline health workers. This resource has become a guide for effective community-level care, ensuring that the knowledge and skills gained during the project will be passed on to future health workers.



The results are clear: about 70% of hypertension patients who received care through TASSH achieved better blood pressure control. Behind this statistic lies the story of lives saved, complications avoided, and futures reclaimed.

This seven-year TASSH Study, which spanned from 2017 to 2024, reminds us that the most pressing healthcare challenges can be addressed with the right focus. TASSH’s journey is one of hope, collaboration, compassion, commitment, and transformation, leaving a lasting impact in every community it reaches.



Read more about TASSH
<https://www.kintampo-hrc.org/pages/uptake.html>

KHRC EMPOWERS MIDWIVES WITH ULTRASOUND SKILLS TO IMPROVE MATERNAL CARE THROUGH PRISMA STUDY



The Kintampo Health Research Centre (KHRC) has trained and certified five newly employed midwives to perform ultrasound scans for pregnant women participating in the PRISMA Maternal and Child Health study. This two-week intensive training was held from Monday 13th to Friday, 24th January 2025, in Kintampo. The training equipped the midwives with the skills and knowledge needed to assist KHRC's research on maternal health.

The midwives will support the Maternal and Child Health study titled "Antenatal, Intrapartum, and Postnatal Care: A Prospective, Longitudinal Study of Maternal and Newborn Health of the Pregnancy Risk Stratification Innovation and Measurement Alliance (PRISMA)" This study, which is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, gathers important information about the risks women face during pregnancy and how to improve healthcare for families in Ghana and other low- and middle-income countries.

The training was led by two highly experienced Obstetrician-Gynecologists from the Ghana Health Service, Dr. Abena Konadu Yawson and Dr. Buah Bosque Hamilton. The midwives

received hands-on training in obstetric ultrasound techniques, including positioning a probe, identifying the baby's position, and assessing the pregnancy's progress. These skills will help ensure accurate results for the study. After the training, the facilitators will continue to review the ultrasound images produced by the midwives, to ensure quality control of the images.

Dr. Yawson emphasized the importance of quality healthcare, encouraging the midwives to apply the skills they have learned to benefit the study and the pregnant women they care for. One of the trained midwives, Ellen Owusua, expressed confidence in using the ultrasound machine to perform scans. "I learnt new techniques to identify various parts of a fetus during a scan," she added.



Beyond performing ultrasound scans, the training prepared the midwives to provide adequate care for the pregnant women and their babies, when they are born. They will monitor the health of both mothers and newborns and offer home-based Postnatal Care (PNC) services to support better health outcomes.

Through the PRISMA study, KHRC is not only equipping midwives with essential skills but also making a lasting impact on maternal and child healthcare in Ghana. This study directly benefits over 3,000 pregnant women across more than 80 communities in the Kintampo North Municipality and Kintampo South District of the Bono East Region, ensuring better health outcomes for mothers and their babies.

Learn more about the PRISMA study: <https://www.kintampo-hrc.org/pages/adopt.html>

The NCD and Environmental Research Strengthening Training (NEST) Programme is now accepting applications from suitably qualified individuals for postgraduate (Master's and PhD) scholarship. This programme aims to provide mentored research opportunities and practical, policy-relevant community-based training for four qualified individuals in Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Epidemiological Research with a focus on Environmental Health Sciences.

This scholarship will provide support for university fees and analytic and fieldwork-related expenses for up to four years (2025 - 2029) for PhD students and one year (2024/2025 academic year) for master's students. For students who have already incurred these costs, reimbursements will be available. Successful candidates will have access to valuable resources, including detailed data on children and adults at Kintampo Health Research Centre (KHRC), as well as specialized research tools.

ABOUT THE NEST PROGRAMME

The NEST Programme (<https://kintampo-hrc.org/nest/>) is a collaboration between the Kintampo Health Research Centre (KHRC), the University of Ghana School of Public Health, Columbia University (CU, USA), and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS, USA). This five-year programme, funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), aims to train Ghanaian researchers to produce evidence on how the environment affects our health and the risks of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), to inform public health policy and improve the overall health of individuals.

NEST PROGRAMME INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR 2025 MASTER'S AND PHD SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME



CALL FOR PHD
AND MASTER'S
SCHOLARSHIP
APPLICATIONS
2025



NCD and Environmental
Research Strengthening
Training (NEST) Program

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Be a first year Master's student or first/second-year PhD student in a recognized university in Ghana or in a second year of a clinical fellowship.
- Demonstrated interest and aptitude for NCD and environmental research assessed through motivation letter.
- Expressed commitment from an academic supervisor at the enrolled university or college.
- Familiarity with 1 or More Statistical and Data Science Programming Languages (e.g., R and/or Python).
- Ability to conduct statistical analysis of data under supervision.
- Willingness to work in a multidisciplinary team.

Interested applicants should visit <http://ksurvey.org:3901/> for more information and application.

Successful candidates will be required to accomplish the following tasks during the scholarship period:

- Complete and submit at least one first-author manuscript based on data sets derived from the NEST programme.
- Actively contribute to other NEST programme manuscripts throughout the programme's duration.
- Deliver a presentation at a local or international conference within six months of final thesis submission for master's students and by the end of the award year three for PhD students.
- Write a reflective essay (1,000 - 1,500 words) detailing the learning experience from the NEST programme, to be completed within six months of final thesis submission for master's students and by the end of the award year three for PhD students.

This is a unique opportunity for passionate students to gain hands-on experience and contribute to impactful NCD and environmental health research.

Applications opened on **January 1, 2025**, and will close on **January 31, 2025**, with award notifications set for **February 28, 2025**.

KHRC TRAINS LABORATORY STAFF TO IMPROVE HEALTHCARE IN BONO EAST REGION



The Seth Owusu-Agyei Medical Laboratory (SOAML) at Kintampo Health Research Centre (KHRC) recently provided practical refresher training for five medical laboratory staff from the Atebubu Government Hospital, Sene West Government Hospital and Kintampo Municipal Hospital.

The training, which was held in the SOAML from Monday, 9th to Thursday, 19th December 2024, sought to strengthen the capacity of the participants to improve healthcare delivery in their respective health facilities.

The two-week refresher training covered aspects of clinical microbiology skills including sample collection, culture techniques, identification of isolates, and testing for antibiotic resistance.

At the end of the training, the participants expressed their appreciation for the hands-on experience and valuable knowledge gained. They thanked KHRC for giving them the opportunity to improve their skills.



Dr. David Dosoo, Head of the SOAML and Deputy Chief Biomedical Scientist, urged the trainees to apply and share their knowledge to benefit their health facilities. He reiterated KHRC's commitment to sharing expertise and supporting efforts that improves healthcare delivery in Ghana.

This refresher training session is one of many training programmes KHRC organizes to build and strengthen the skills of health workers in Ghana to help improve the overall health of people in the country.

KHRC REVIEWS STRATEGIC PLAN TO STRENGTHEN HEALTH RESEARCH AND IMPACT



The Kintampo Health Research Centre (KHRC) has successfully reviewed the third year of its five-year strategic plan, reflecting on the achievements of 2024 and setting priorities for 2025. The review meeting, held on January 23, 2025, provided an opportunity for various departments and project teams to showcase their successes and identify areas for improvement.

A key highlight of the meeting was the presentation of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) report for 2024 by Mr. Andrews Boakye Agyapong, the Research Enterprise Development (RED) Officer. His presentation assessed KHRC's performance in key areas, including research and impact, financial sustainability, people and culture, operational excellence, and strategic partnerships, which are the five core goals of the Centre's strategic plan. The review also highlighted the Centre's efforts to build staff capacity in public health and biomedical research, proactively share research findings with stakeholders, and improve health delivery systems.



Following the presentations, staff engaged in discussions and group work sessions, focusing on the 2025 roadmap and strategies to achieve the outlined goals. Heads of various projects shared insights on how their teams plan to implement activities for the year ahead.

In his address, Prof. Kwaku Poku Asante, Director of KHRC, commended the staff for their dedication and hard work toward achieving the Centre's strategic goals. He emphasized the importance of continuous improvement and collaboration to drive impactful health research. He urged staff to view their individual growth as essential to the Centre's overall progress, encouraging them to take ownership of their work and actively contribute to strengthening KHRC's research environment.

Prof. Asante also highlighted underscored the need to engage stakeholders effectively and reciprocate the goodwill the Centre receives from partners. He called for the strengthening of both local and international collaborations. He emphasized the importance of financial accountability, noting that KHRC's sustainability depends on how well resources are managed. He encouraged all teams to adopt responsible financial practices to maintain credibility and attract future funding.



KHRC remains committed to advancing health research and strengthening its impact on healthcare in Ghana and beyond. Through continuous evaluation and strategic planning, the Centre aims to drive progress and make meaningful contributions to public health.

RESEARCHERS FROM MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY EXPLORES RESEARCH COLLABORATION WITH KHRC



Kintampo Health Research Centre (KHRC) hosted a delegation from Michigan University on a visit aimed at exploring potential research collaborations. The team's visit on Monday, 27th January, provided an opportunity for both institutions to exchange insights on their research activities and discuss areas of mutual interest.

The Michigan University team, represented by Cheryl Moyer, Ashura Bakari, and Emily Treleaven, delivered a presentation outlining their various research engagements in Ghana, highlighting their work in health and development.

Dr. Seyram Kaali, Principal Medical Officer and Head of Clinical Studies at KHRC, provided a comprehensive presentation on KHRC's research scope, with a particular focus on the Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS).



His address underscored KHRC's significant contributions to public health research in Ghana, including clinical trials, disease surveillance, and community health interventions.



The discussions that followed explored collaborative opportunities in project implementation, data sharing, and capacity building. Both teams deliberated on ways to leverage each other's strengths to advance health research in Ghana. Following the presentations and discussions, the Michigan team toured KHRC's facilities to familiarize themselves with the Centre's resource capacity.



The visit marked a significant step toward fostering long-term research partnerships between KHRC and Michigan University, with the shared goal of improving health outcomes through evidence-based research.



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