

Medical Education Partnership Initiative (MEPI) – Ethiopia Made Available More than 1800 medical books to improve the quality of medical education

Books are engines for learning and if available can allow a student to seek and obtain knowledge anytime, anywhere. Medical textbooks in the Ethiopian context, where demand is high, availability limited, and faculty time scarce, can serve as a compass to knowledge and understanding. Despite continuous efforts from different local and global initiatives to close the gap in demand for medical text books, availability of these books and other quality reading materials for the students who need them in developing countries remained an elusive goal.

Given the importance of medical books and other educational materials to maintaining the quality of medical education in resource limited areas like in Ethiopia, the Medical Education Partnership Initiative (MEPI) project housed in the School of Medicine at Addis Ababa University's College of Health Sciences provided more than 1800 different clinical and basic sciences medical text books to the medical schools of Addis Ababa, Haramaya and Hawassa Universities and Defense Force College of Health Sciences. MEPI is a United States (US) government funded initiative that aims to increase the quality and quantity of health care workers in Sub Saharan Africa.

MEPI Ethiopia, a consortium project that includes the aforementioned schools, has made substantial steps towards improving quality of medical education by giving students access to a wide range of new text books and will soon allow them to enjoy Information Technology based learning resources such as a digital library and e-Granary which are currently in the process of being implemented. Dr. Dereje Gulilat, the Dean of Addis Ababa University, School of Medicine (AAU SoM) said, *"It is wonderful when initiatives like MEPI are interested in assisting us in our effort to tackle the most important problem of our school, limited availability of up-to-date medical books and other reading materials in our library"*. However, the students were the ones most excited to receive the books.



Previously, students waited for a very long time, sometimes for more than half a day, to get access to basic/major clinical books like Harrison's Internal Medicine or Nelson's pediatrics, and would be allowed to use it for a period of only an hour. But After MEPIS' provision of books, the students have easy access to these books.

For the instructors of these medical schools, the books are an invaluable tool to complete their work and they anxiously awaited the books' arrival. One instructor mentioned, "This is an opportunity that we cannot miss. We need these books in our classrooms."



As a result of MEPIs' efforts to increase the number of books available in the book store and circulation desk, the ratio of medical text book to student registered for the course decreased by half. Currently, in Addis Ababa University School of Medicine, student to text book ratio is almost one to one for the major clinical courses despite the sharp increase of medical students. Improved access to the

major clinical text books (internal medicine, gynecology and obstetrics, pediatrics, and surgery) and other basic science text books (physiology, anatomy, biochemistry, etc.) has encouraged students to read for additional hours and further increase their knowledge.