

NIH collaborates with AAS and Bill & Melinda Gates

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New fellowship program will support the next generation of African scientific leaders



NIH, the African Academy of Sciences, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are collaborating to establish the African Postdoctoral Training Initiative.

Ten African scientists have been selected for training at the National Institutes of Health as part of a new fellowship program to build research capacity in African countries and develop ongoing scientific partnerships

The inaugural cohort will assume their positions in NIH host labs in early 2019. NIH will provide two years of training under principal investigators who share the fellows' research interests. The African scientists will then return to their home

institutions and receive two years of support to continue the research and establish themselves as independent investigators. NIH and the Gates Foundation are together providing about \$4 million for the program.

Director Francis S. Collins, NIH Director said, "Our goal is to equip these talented African fellows with the skills to become scientific leaders, prepared to help solve their country's health challenges and train future generations of researchers. By designing the African Postdoctoral Training Initiative to begin at NIH and then continue at their home institution, we aim to prevent 'brain drain,' build sustainable research capacity, and establish long-term collaborations between U.S. scientists and African investigators and research institutions."

Trevor Mundel, president of the Global Health Division at the Gates Foundation said, "It is imperative to strengthen African scientific leadership to advance health and development goals on the continent. We are thrilled to partner with NIH and the African Academy of Sciences to support these 10 outstanding researchers working to solve the world's greatest health challenges. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, the world needs to accelerate innovation and global scientific collaboration. Training from NIH, one of the world's foremost biomedical research institutions, will help these scientists develop the transformational solutions the world and their communities urgently need."

The fellows come from six African countries: Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya and Egypt. They've been matched with labs from seven institutes at NIH and will study diseases and conditions that are research priorities in their respective countries, including infectious diseases, maternal and child health, and diabetes.

The fellowship program targets early career scientists who have doctoral degrees and less than five years of research experience. Candidates must also be citizens of an African country and employed at one of the continent's academic, research or government institutions.

NIH's Fogarty International Center is coordinating the fellowship program. The African Academy of Sciences managed the recruitment and selection process, and plans to recruit another cohort in 2020.