

The succeeding phase in ensuring effective prevention and control of epidemics and other priority public health problems in Africa

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ABSTRACT

The inaugural editorial outlines the African Field Epidemiology Network's (AFENET) history as a publisher and the vision for the Journal of Interventional Epidemiology and Public Health (JIEPH).

KEYWORDS

JIEPH, Public Health, FETPs, AFENET, Journal

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Editorial

A landmark achievement! The Journal of Interventional Epidemiology and Public Health (JIEPH) marks the next phase in the African Field Epidemiology Network's (AFENET) mission "ensuring effective prevention and control of epidemics and other priority public health problems in Africa" [1]. A scientific journal with a focus on public health published by AFENET is an idea as old as the network itself. The benefits of the network have been clearly described elsewhere [2–4]. The impact of AFENET on global public health is a known unknown, given the network's reach and the number of field epidemiologists trained so far in frontline (>5000), intermediate (>200) and advanced programs (>2000) [5]. JIEPH is the next step towards extending the reach of the Network's capacity into further informing public health policy formulation and practice around the globe.

As early as 2008, AFENET entered into a strategic partnership with the Pan African Medical Journal (PAMJ) to serve as its publisher [6]. The continuing partnership has led to the situating of PAMJ as the premier peer reviewed open access medical journal on the continent. PAMJ has published numerous articles from AFENET member programs along with supplements and the 2013 AFENET conference proceedings. The supplements include network showcases like the "Field Epidemiology in Africa" supplement (2011), program showcases like the Nigeria (2014), Ghana (2016), Kenya (2017) FELTP supplements and subject-focused supplements like the Ebola in Africa supplement (2015).

When the AFENET-PAMJ partnership was inaugurated, AFENET had a membership of nine countries while operating in 15 [6]. At present, AFENET operates in 31 countries with a membership of >25 [5]. The stark growth is matched in PAMJ which is now listed in PubMed (Acronym: Pan Afr Med J) and has since published thirty volumes and has expanded to include one constituent journal PAMJ Conference Proceedings with at least two more planned for the future. On AFENET's part, the growth was guided by the AFENET Strategic Plan 2012-2016 which had strategic priorities with a focus on broad areas like "Publication and Documentation" [7]. With the adoption of the AFENET Strategic Plan 2017-2022 the focus of the strategic objectives has been

enhanced to look beyond what can be done for the continent to how what is being done on the continent can be of use to the world [8].

Enter JIEPH, as a special international peer reviewed open-access scientific journal focused specifically on interventional epidemiology and public health instead of the entire medical sphere. JIEPH will provide an outlet for the yet growing critical mass of all those trained by FE(L)TPs and similar public health training programs around the globe as well as for ministries, institutions, agencies, practitioners and researchers working on public health-related issues. JIEPH seeks to influence how public health is understood and practiced in Africa and around the world based on contemporary field experience with the added aim of providing evidence to drive policy formulation.

The cover design of this maiden edition reflects its debut at the seventh AFENET Scientific Conference, AFENET's celebration of maturity in scientific publication and the prevailing focus on global health security/public health emergency response. The field scene shows actual responders at the back-to-back Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since May 2018 when coincidentally the AFENET Corps of Disease Detectives (ACoDD) was launched. ACoDD is a voluntary civil corps of culturally competent professional field epidemiologists based on the one-health approach. It provides a platform that systematically and rapidly mobilises field epidemiology workforce for the detection, prevention or containment of disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies in Africa and beyond.

The manuscripts published in JIEPH will cover the following thematic areas: disease outbreak investigations, public health surveillance, population-based epidemiological studies, secondary data analysis, reports and assessment of public health interventions among others. Some of these thematic areas are featured in this maiden issue. This depicts the range of public health concerns that serving-residents and graduates from AFENET programs address. It is our hope that even more perspectives from population-based public health interventions and research around the world will be submitted for consideration. In time, JIEPH will become the veritable source for field-based research and evidence on public health

interventions. It is with the help of our network-countries, global partnerships and collaborations that this laudable vision will be attained.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest.

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