

Brief history

Published on Department of Public Health Pharmacology & Tox. (<http://phpt.uonbi.ac.ke>)

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The Department of Public Health, Pharmacology and Toxicology (PHPT) is one of the five academic units in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi. It was established in the 1972 by combining the closely related disciplines of Pharmacology, Toxicology and Veterinary Public Health. The two disciplines were originally in different departments. Veterinary Public Health was part of the department of clinical studies while Pharmacology and Toxicology part of the Department of Veterinary Pathology and Microbiology.

The Department is located 15 Km from the city centre at the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, of the University of Nairobi. The establishment of the Department of PHPT's physical facilities was financed by a grant from the Norwegian government. The first local academic members of staff to serve the department got their postgraduate training through the Norwegian government and USAID grants. Some staff trained in Norway while others were trained locally using the Norwegian government grant. Others trained in America under USAID grant. The Department was initially headed by Prof. K. Fossum from Norway and had two other academic staff seconded to the Department by the Norwegian government. The first Kenyan to head the department, Prof Joseph M. Gathuma took over leadership of the Department in 1978 and served the Department until July 1992. He was replaced by Prof S. E. Mitema who served the department until 1998. Prof. Mitema was replaced by Prof. Francis M. Njeruh who served the Department until 2004 when he handed over leadership to Prof. William O. Ogara. Prof. Ogara served the Department until July 2010 when he was replaced by the current Chairman, Prof Jackson N. Ombui.

The department started training in Veterinary Public Health, Pharmacology and Toxicology to Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine students and later to Bachelor of technology and BSc Wildlife and Tourism students. This mandate continues to date. In 1974, a Master of Science in Public Health, Pharmacology and Toxicology was approved by Senate. This offered opportunities for postgraduate training and the establishment of public health, pharmacology and toxicology research activities in the department. In 1988, two separate postgraduate programs (Masters in Veterinary Public Health and a Master of Science in Pharmacology and Toxicology) were launched that replaced the Master of Science in Public Health, Pharmacology and Toxicology. In 1992, a Masters in Veterinary Epidemiology and Economics was launched through the research grant from Canadian International Development Agency that was given through a collaboration with the University of Guelph in Canada. In 2010, a Master of Science in Natural Products and Bioprospecting was launched. In the same year 2010, Diploma, Bachelors, Masters and PhD programs in Leather Science and Technology were approved by the University Senate. These programs were launched in 2012/2013 academic year.

Currently, the department provides training and research in the following specialized areas: Veterinary Public Health (Food Microbiology, Food Hygiene, Food and Environmental Toxicology, Zoonoses, Meat hygiene), Pharmacology, Toxicology, Epidemiology, Livestock Economics and Business management, Biostatistics, Computer Application and Information Systems, Immunology and Microbial Biotechnology and in Leather Science and Technology.

The Department has over time mainstreamed consultancy services which are provided in the following areas: Acute toxicity testing of new pesticides, Drug efficacy trials, toxicological analysis of feed samples, microbiological analysis of food, water and feeds, mycotoxin analysis, slaughterhouse design and construction, field surveys among others.

Current Chairman

Prof. Jackson N. Ombui BVM, MSc, PhD (Nairobi), August 2010 – to date .

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