



The Pharmacy Assistant Training Program in Malawi is contributing to a robust pharmaceutical workforce through the introduction of a two-year certificate-level training program focused on improving medicines management and pharmaceutical practice at the health center level. By 2016, 150 Pharmacy Assistants will graduate and be deployed to health centers in Malawi.

The Pharmacy Assistant Training Program Addressing A Shortage of Qualified Personnel

Malawi, like many low- and middle-income countries, has a critical shortage of pharmacy personnel. Currently government health centers have no trained pharmacy personnel on staff. This leads to unqualified personnel managing medicines and supply chain and dispensing to patients, which impacts patient care and medicine availability. The Ministry of Health has set a goal of having a pharmacy assistant in every rural health facility.

Approach

Hands-On Training to Solve Real World Problems

In collaboration with our partners, and with support from the Barr Foundation, USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, and Vitol Foundation, VillageReach launched a two-year program at the Malawi College of Health Sciences with a strong emphasis on supply chain management and hands-on, experiential learning including two five-month practicums. Not only are students trained to dispense life-saving medications and provide patients with essential advice; they also gain the necessary skills to ensure that the medications and supplies their communities need are actually available.

A training program focused on practical skills and experiential learning:

- Develops a new cadre of health worker at the pharmacy level
- Field-based practicum placements provide immediate human resources support to hospitals and health centers
- Prepares students for the environments in which they will work after completing their training



Impact

Improving Efficiency and Quality

Time Spent on Logistics: Clinical staff time at health centers spent on logistics tasks decreased by 81% - from 48 hours to 9 hours.



Pharmaceutical Practice: The average score for appropriate dispensing—including giving proper instructions on how to take medication and possible side effects—increased from 41% to 60%.

Data Quality: The accuracy of stock on hand and consumption data reported on monthly LMIS reports increased from 55% to 73% report accuracy.



Storeroom Management: The average score for appropriate health center storeroom management – including organizing medicines by “First to Expire, First Out” – increased from 72% to 79%.

Data from initial evaluation results based on student practicum placements in health centers.

The Health Center In-Charges at practicum sites report substantial improvements in patient flow, decreases in waiting time, and relief from logistics and dispensing duties since the students arrived.

“Through this program, our health center receives one student who has already received training in the areas of dispensing and inventory management—more training than anyone currently working at the health center, including myself.”

-Andrew Hauli,
Health Center In-Charge



Key Partners



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GLOBAL MEDICINES PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

VillageReach is a global health innovator that develops, tests, implements and scales new solutions to critical health system challenges in low-resource environments, with an emphasis on strengthening the “last mile” of healthcare delivery.
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VILLAGE REACH
Starting at the Last Mile