Author's response to reviews

Title: EDCTP Regional Networks of Excellence: unprecedented changes in the landscape of clinical trials in Africa

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to the review of the introductory article on the Networks of Excellence from BMC Public Health Journal

To: Associate Editor
   Bio-Med Central Public Health Journal

Date: 4th February 2013

Dear Prof. Steinsbekk,

Re: MS-3759719438013223, with its title modified to “EDCTP Regional Networks of Excellence: initial merits for planned clinical trials in Africa”

Thank you very much for communicating your feedback and the reviewers’ comments to the re-submitted of the article above.

The title of this introductory descriptive article has been modified as recommended by the reviewer 2. The modified title reflects the shared initial merits and lessons learnt from these research networks for publication in your reputable international peer-review journal.

We attach a point-by-point response to the 3 comments raised by the reviewer 2 plus a revised manuscript with track changes for visualization of amendments made. The conclusion in the abstract has been tapered as advised. This revised manuscript conforms to the recommended journal style.

We confirm that this manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by another journal. All authors have approved the revised manuscript and agree with the second re-submission to the journal of BMC Public Health. Again, we kindly request for a waiver on the article-processing charges for authors from resource-constrained settings as offered by your respectable journal. We have read and abided by the ethical standards and guidelines for the manuscripts submitted to your journal. The authors have declared non-financial conflicts of interest as implementers of the presented regional networks of excellence and also joint appraisers of this initial work submitted for publication.

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We look forward to receiving your feedback and update on the status of this revised manuscript at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

George Miiru, MD, MSc
Point-by-point response to 2\textsuperscript{nd} reviewer's comments dated 13\textsuperscript{th} December 2012

**MS:** 3759719438013223, EDCTP Regional Networks of Excellence: unprecedented changes in the landscape of clinical trials in Africa

Reviewer 2's comments

1. Comment: "I think the title needs changing to – EDCTP networks of excellence: initial progress reports."

   Response: The title has now been revised to \textit{EDCTP Regional Networks of Excellence: initial merits for planned clinical trials in Africa.}

   This takes into account the shared initial merits, experiences and lessons learnt from the progress reports in strengthening capacity of regional networks for improved coordination and conduct of planned clinical trials in Africa.

2. Comment: "From the abstract and text results sections I see the networks were launched between 2009 and 2012. The evaluation was conducted in late 2011. So, does this mean at least one network had not been launched when the evaluation was done? Surely that would be pointless."

   Response: Thank you for identifying this error. The networks were launched between 2009 and 2010 (not 2012) as illustrated in figure 1 on the map of Africa.

   This error has been corrected in the abstract (page 2) and harmonized with the main text of the re-submitted manuscript.

   So the initial evaluation was done when all the 4 networks had been launched and results are included for all.

3. Comment: "The conclusions do not always flow from the results. In particular the suggestion of forming such networks in south east asia is unwarranted and is not a legitimate conclusion from this study."

   Response: That earlier concluding statement in the abstract has been deleted as recommended. It has been replaced with \textit{The shared initial merits and lessons learnt portray in part the strengthened capacity of these networks for improved research coordination and conduct of planned multi-center clinical trials in Africa} in the abstract on page 3.