

Vice-Chancellors speech as delivered by Prof. H. W. Mutoro.

I wish to welcome all of you to the Molecular Biology Amplification workshop that started on Tuesday 24, 2014 and will run until Thursday 26, 2014. This workshop being the first of its kind in Kenya and in the region gives me a great honour to be the convener as the Vice-Chancellor - UoN.

The College of Health Sciences (CHS) came into being first as a Faculty of Medicine on the 3rd July 1967 and was later established as a College in 1985. This college has never looked back from the time of its inception and has over the years produced the finest health care professional within the Country and the entire World. As the years progressed, several schools and Institutes have been established within the CHS with the latest being **KAVI-Institute of Clinical Research (KAVI-ICR); having been a research unit within the department of medical-microbiology since 1999.**

KAVI's initial motivation was to conduct basic HIV research, epidemiology and carry out research aimed at the discovery of an HIV/AIDS vaccine. This pioneering work is still on going at KAVI. Over the years, KAVI has experienced tremendous growth, and conducted nine HIV vaccine trials, ten basic sciences research projects, multiple epidemiologic research projects and most important established an international accredited research laboratory.

KAVI has pioneered the discovery of highly potent and broadly neutralizing antibodies against the HIV virus, this pioneering work has had tremendous impact on the search of an HIV vaccine.

In addition KAVI is now recognised as centre of mucosal immunology in the region having pioneered research projects of on mucosal sampling and standardization of mucosal immunity assays. These mucosal assays have now been incorporated in the evaluation of immune response against candidate HIV vaccines

This exceptional growth in human resource, infrastructure and creation of new scientific knowledge that has informed policy and improved practice, resulted to the University of Nairobi senate elevating KAVI from a research unit to an Institute within the CHS.

The new status as an Institute has allowed KAVI-ICR to identify and pursue a wider variety of scientific inquiries in line with Kenya Vision 2030 and Millennium Development Goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, I personally have views regarding research in general and research as a tool to impact on health care with specific reference to Kenya.

I believe that medical research should:

1. **Provide integrated competencies and training that achieves specific goals in policy formulation and advancement in medical sciences**
2. **Strengthen health research in a way that enables institutions and national governments to benefit from research through formulation of best practice.**
3. **Enhance the knowledge for implementation of prevention, surveillance, early diagnosis and management of diseases.**
4. **Reduce brain drain to other research settings outside Africa while contributing to the retention of human resource.**

Fellow colleagues and participants from various countries, the use of molecular biology in medicine has revolutionized the way we conduct research, surveillance, diagnosis, treatment and prevention. The training and the skills that you are acquiring through this workshop are skills for the future. Molecular biology is at the core of understanding how the living world functions. **You are all aware of the controversy surrounding GMOs.**

Ladies and gentlemen I urge you all to come forward and utilize the molecular biology skills in your research, clinical diagnostics, treatment and more so in forensics investigation. Now that University of Nairobi in partnership with Bio-Zeq technologies of Kenya and Quigen of Germany have established the molecular biology application's laboratory at KAVI, lets us all take advantage of the lab and use it to the maximum for the benefit of the countries within the region. African cannot afford to be left behind

As advances are being made in molecular biology, these advances are also being applied in forensic sciences to improve in forensic investigation. With technology now available at the University of Nairobi through this partnership we urge all those concerned to feel free to collaborate with the University of Nairobi in training of forensic sciences investigators

I wish to thank all the facilitators and participants, especially those from, Burundi, Ethiopia, Europe, Nigeria, Japan, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and of course our own from Kenya for finding time and making it to the workshop, your contributions are highly appreciated. I wish you all a fruitful three days training.

It is now my pleasure to declare the Molecular Biology Amplification workshop officially open.