

# A Deeper Look..... looking into the lives of people and projects that are making a difference in Malawi.....

**“I can say that during the past years the college has produced excellent researchers...”** *Thengo Kavinya talks to Prof.Mwapasa acting director of Research Support Centre about his career*



## Prof Victor Mwapasa

Research at the College is hosted in different departments and coordinated by the Research Support Centre. Research has helped Malawi to improve the management of health-related conditions and to formulate relevant health programs and policies. Furthermore, research activities have accorded Malawian graduates and scientists an opportunity to receive hands-on research training and obtain higher academic qualifications. The College of Medicine and its collaborators have in the past years generated high quality health research and the findings have enabled Malawi to improve the management of health-related conditions and to formulate relevant health programs and policies I had a chance to speak to the newly appointed Acting Director of the Research Support Centre about his career and here are some excerpts....

“I am a medical doctor by profession, I graduated in 1994 in fact we were the third group of doctors to graduate in the country. After that I did my internship at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital before I was posted to Chikhwawa where I worked as a DHO between 1996 and 1998 when also worked at Zomba hospital on the same position”. I later went for my Masters in 1999 in Michigan,USA and did my PhD from 2000-2004 and returned to CoM as a lecturer in the department of community health. In 2007 I was offered a three year contract at Malawi Liverpool Wellcome trust where I worked as a Director of Research up to March 2010 and am now Acting Director of the Research Support Centre since September 2010”, he explains.

Prof Mwapasa believes that the college has made great strides in research as witnessed by the establishment of well

instuted offices of research; “I believe research at the college has gained root as witnessed by a well established research institution such as the Research Support Centre and by having the research policy approved makes it easier for research to be coordinated and managed”. He believes that during the past years the college has produced excellent researchers as witnessed in the number of studies he has supervised, “I am confident that the college has been producing excellent researchers only that most of these would require proper mentoring so that they develop an interest in research”. He wishes the college could invest in young researchers as they conduct research that is relevant to Malawian context.

Asked if the studies conducted in the country have benefitted the ordinary Malawian he explains that he sees these as guides for decision making and that they are a tool for better health ideas. “I know of a number of studies which have helped decision making in the health sector e.g. the Malaria study”. He was quick to point out that not all studies generate results as some are only plenary.

Prof Mwapasa outlines the securing of the European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) grant as one of his major career highlight. “I felt very privileged after I had secured this grant and also national services I offer to NAC makes me feel that my public health services are being appreciated by the publics,” he explains. Mwapasa explains that he works from 7:30am-9:30pm every day in order to contain his busy schedule. “I enjoy my work and I don’t feel pain when working. I would rather be looking at a research paper rather than just staying idle”. He explains.

During his free time Victor likes to play with his children, swimming, watch soccer although he is not a fanatic. He also enjoys watching Television more especially the History Channel.

He concludes by advising the college to invest in young researchers and form a proper trail from a junior researcher up to Post Docs as this would enhance good research production.

**“Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.”**  
**Albert Szent-Gyorgyi**