

**OFFICIAL OPENING:
THE SCHOOL OF DENTAL SCIENCES RESEARCH WEEK.
APRIL 2012.
NAIROBI.**

- DVC (AA), Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi
- Principal College of Health Sciences, Prof. Isaac Kibwage
- Dean, School of Dental Sciences
- All other invited Guests and Researchers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to be with you today to preside over the opening of the School of Dental Sciences Annual Research Week, 2012.

I am also delighted that you have made time for this very important forum of Research Week, geared towards sharpening research skills of our postgraduate students within the School of Dental Sciences.

Many of the things we do in our daily lives are based on common sense, what we have learnt through personal experience or observations. However, commonsense, experience or observation is not always the best approach to doing things. Many times there are gaps in knowledge, theories, and personal experiences about how some things can work better and how some can be improved. This is what makes research critical in satisfying intellectual curiosity as well as finding answers to life's questions.

The UoN Research Policy (2008) recognises that the existing gaps that underlie the realization of the MDGs and the Kenya Vision 2030 cannot be adequately addressed without inputs of institutions of higher learning and research.

A recent daily nation publication described research as the missing link in Africa's development. To put this into perspective statistics from UNESCO indicates that the entire African continent is home to only 2.3% of the world's researchers. UNESCO also estimates that on average, Africa has only 169 researchers per one million inhabitants.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Presently, the drive in Kenya's national development is steered by two very important forces: Vision 2030 and the new constitutional dispensation. These two forces have changed the environment for policy formulation and implementation. The new system of governance demands that the traditional approach to policy formulation and implementation be replaced with a new system that is participatory and evidence-based.

Research is therefore not only an original contribution to knowledge with the purpose of deepening understanding within the academic discipline, but is also a contribution to development, providing solutions to societal problems. While we may do research in order to achieve tenure and promotions, it is now recognised that the real need for research is to transfer research into practice so that the interactions between research, reflection, practice and policy moves us forward in terms of our knowledge base and in terms of development.

The GoK has recognised this and now constantly seeks information on research activities and outcomes from Universities and research institutions in the country.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this stage I wish to seek your indulgence to digress into highlighting just a few events at the RPE Division which are intended to grow research at the UoN, as a matter of information.

The RPE Division has put in place mechanisms to invigorate and facilitate research activities within the university by streamlining research management and building research capacity. Last year, the RPE Division in partnership with UNES initiated the proposal writing workshops in which a number of academic staff members have been trained. To date, about 134 academic staff members have been trained. The workshops are going on and I wish to encourage staff members to take advantage of the opportunity and attend the training workshops. Our target is to have 500 staff members trained by the end of the year.

The RPE Division has brought together a number of multidisciplinary teams to answer to calls for research funding. We have already been successful in responding to these calls and are still working on others. We hope that this will inculcate a strong research culture at the UoN and create a vibrant research environment in all Colleges.

The Division also recently held a workshop to develop a UoN Research Grants Management Strategic Plan. The strategic plan will form the blueprint of research grants management at the UoN which will streamline the management of research processes from proposal development stage to dissemination of findings to engaging and informing policymaking.

As we all know, research is a key component of University training and also of national development. In fact, an invigorated research culture and environment starts with sound postgraduate research training.

This research week is therefore in tandem with the University of Nairobi research strategy whose goal is to strengthen our research capacity for a sustainable national development. Such a forum is a welcome initiative towards building a sound foundation in research training and well reasoned research projects.

Lastly, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish you a fruitful Research Week and hope that this will help in building a strong research foundation within the School of Dental Sciences and the UoN. It is now my humble task to declare the School of Dental Sciences Research Week, 2012 officially opened.

Thank you.