



CDT-Africa News

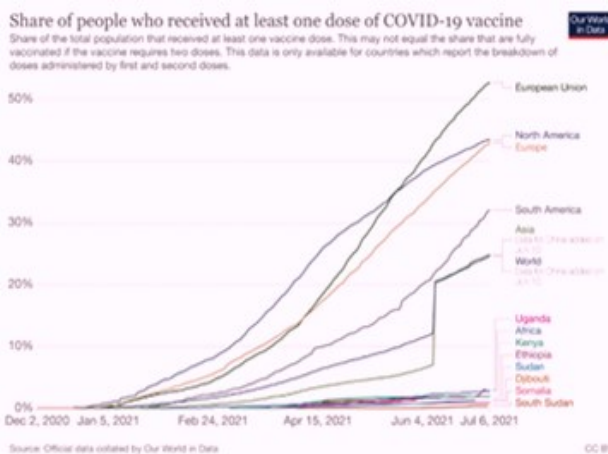


A Newsletter of the Center for Innovative Drug Development and Therapeutic Trials for Africa



Editorial

The 3rd wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is probably taking hold in Ethiopia (see Page 7). While there is no evidence yet that the Delta variant is in the country, the pandemic could be more intense if this variant is in Ethiopia. Vaccines remain the main hope for ending this pandemic. However, the vaccination rate in parts of the world where 80% of the people lives remains extremely low. So far just 1.5% of Africans have received the full dose. Africa is unlikely to achieve even the mediocre WHO target of 10% rate by September 2021. This means the continent will continue to be subject to various restrictions that will have substantive social and economic impacts. Africa is not competitive enough to be in the vaccine market. The current procurement structures are unlikely to supply the needed vaccine. Africa has to be self-sufficient for its vaccine and other medical product needs. Building endogenous medical discovery capacity should be a priority. CDT-Africa continues to work towards this.



In July, CDT-Africa received donation of key cell culture laboratory equipment worth about \$130,000 from our partner, the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, as part of the effort to build endogenous medical discovery capacity. With the right partnerships, and government leadership, it is possible to develop the full range of capacity to attain self-sufficiency in vaccine and other medical products. In relation to government leadership, we are very grateful for the attention CDT-Africa received from His Excellency Ato Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, and Her Excellency Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health. Building endogenous medical discovery and development capacity has to be a national agenda.

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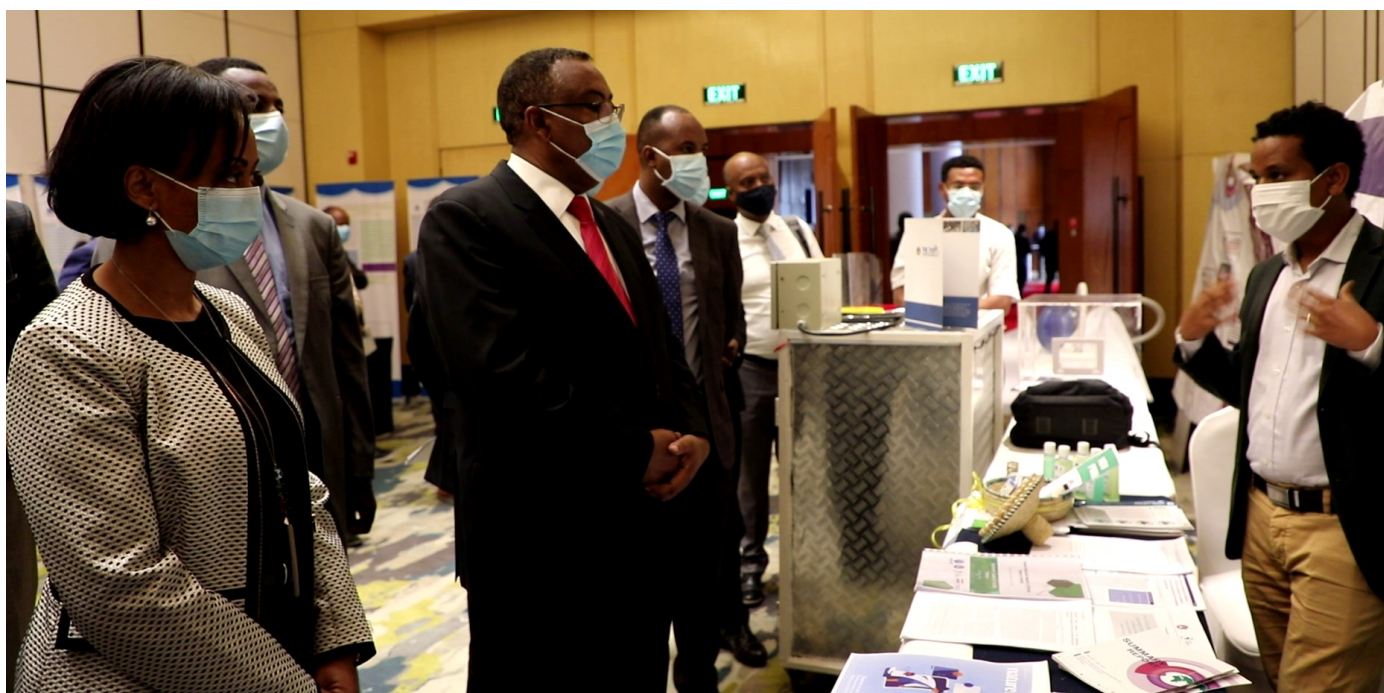
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CDT-Africa receives a visit from Ethiopia's Deputy PM, and Health Minister



His Excellency Ato Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, and Her Excellency Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health, were briefed on CDT-Africa's COVID-19 responses at the National COVID-19 Research Summit organized by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Ministry of Health, June 11-12, Skylight Hotel, Addis Ababa.

H.E. Demeke Mekonnen and H.E. Dr. Lia Tadesse visited the stall of CDT-Africa, where the centre was exhibiting its work to support the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They appreciated CDT-Africa's efforts and achievements so far.

Speaking at the Summit, H.E. Ato Demeke Mekonnen appreciated the role of higher education institutions in the fight against COVID-19. He expressed the government's commitment to supporting endogenous research and innovations.

H.E. Dr. Lia Tadesse on her part noted the need for strengthening the COVID-19 mitigation efforts and the need to support these efforts with research evidence.

H.E. Dr. Samuel Urkato, Minister of Science and Higher Education, for his part, urged higher education institutions to support the efforts

underway to contain COVID-19 and strengthen their research as there is still so much we are yet to learn about the virus and the disease.

H.E. Dr. Mulu Nega, State Minister of Science and Higher Education said the pandemic has negatively impacted our economic, social and political endeavours, and sadly, it has taken many precious lives. He appreciated higher education institutions' efforts in the response against COVID-19 including the knowledge synthesis and the production of personal protective equipment locally, among others.

CDT-Africa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic included knowledge translation and dissemination as well as product development. The centre created a Knowledge Synthesis Team to curate evidence daily from various credible sources. The updates were shared with the Ministry of Health directly and to the academic community and the public through the centre's website, social media and publications in reputable international journals. The centre has produced and distributed natural product-based hand sanitizer. Education-relevant responses were undertaken in terms of education delivery restructuring and implementation of longer-term plans. CDT-Africa will continue its COVID-19 related activities until the end of the pandemic.

IUCEA technical team visits CDT-Africa

A technical team from the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), responsible for regional facilitation and coordination of the Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE II) Project, visited CDT-Africa, 28-29 June 2021. The team consisted of Dr. Jonathan Stephen Mbwambo, Project Coordinator of ACE II, and Ms. Agnes Asiimwe, Information and Communication Officer for ACE II.

The team's visit focused on reviewing progress made by the center and holding discussions on achievements and challenges so far.

Welcoming the delegation was Prof. Abebaw Fekadu, CDT-Africa's Leader. He appreciated the dedication of IUCEA and the World Bank in the center's endeavors.

Dr. Tsegahun Manyazewal, Scientific Coordinator at CDT-Africa, presented to the delegation the achievements, challenges, and the plans of CDT-Africa.

The delegates visited CDT-Africa's Innovation Café - a quiet, well-designed co-working and mentoring space for innovators; the Phase I Clinical Trial Unit, the Medical Discovery Lab facilities and the Biomedical hub (the Africa Bio-Hub, a regional medical discovery facility under refurbishment). The team also had opportunity to interview senior faculty of CDT-Africa, view some of the new medical products and to discuss with postdoctoral fellows and MSc students.



Dr. Belete A. Legesse, Post Doctorial Research fellow briefing the delegates

Both delegates noted their longstanding interest in the work of CDT-Africa and appreciated the research and product development efforts of CDT-Africa and the need to support the center to achieve its novel objectives.

The team appreciated the Centre's collaboration with the private sector, postdoctoral programs that are contributing to bridge the chasm between education and knowledge translation in Africa, and the efforts in giving opportunities for women to succeed in science.

The delegates also took part in the Green Legacy initiative, which calls for planting 6 billion trees this year.



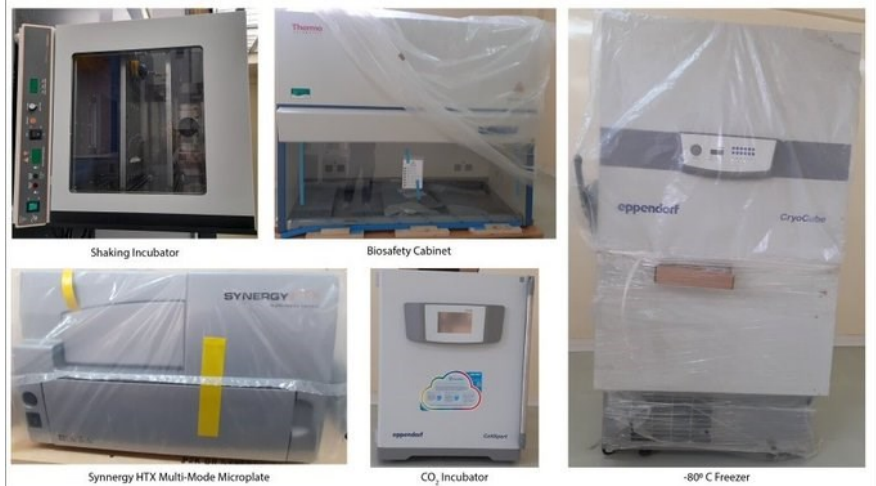
Delegates planting trees

The ACE II project seeks to strengthen selected 24 Centres of Excellences to deliver quality post-graduate education and build collaborative research capacity in industry, agriculture, health, education and applied statistics.

CDT-Africa to establish state-of-the-art cell culture laboratory

CDT-Africa is establishing a state-of-the-art Cell Culture Laboratory at Sefero Selam Campus, Addis Ababa University.

CDT-Africa recently secured equipment, supplies, and reagents worth over \$130,000 as part of its collaborative project with the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, UK, with funding from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), UK.



The equipment and supplies strengthen CDT-Africa's research and educational activities in drug, vaccine, and diagnostic discovery and development.

CDT-Africa staff holds annual review and planning meeting



CDT-Africa held its annual review and planning meeting, 14-15 June 2021, Liesak Resort, Bishoftu. The objective of the meeting was to reflect on the activities carried out during the fiscal year, challenges and opportunities and discussed planned activities for the next fiscal year.

During the occasion, Centre Leader Prof. Abebaw Fekadu appreciated the resilience of the staff during the challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the key milestones and

achievements of the centre despite the difficult year. He highlighted key partnerships and MoUs signed during the year that provide on-going opportunities.

The meeting underscored the need for focusing on the core functions of CDT-Africa, i.e., product development research and education. To this end, the centre will continue to strengthen its medical discovery laboratory facility, ensuring on-going support of the University leadership and mobilising support from the government.

Interview with one of the graduating students at CDT-Africa

Hanna Amanuel Tesfahunei is a graduating student who just defended her MSc Thesis in Clinical Trials at CDT-Africa. We asked her few questions about the program, her journey, and her future career goals.

CDT-Africa News: can you briefly introduce yourself and the program you were involved in at CDT-Africa?

Hanna: My name is Hanna Anamuel. I completed my undergraduate studies in 2017 in Eritrea. I joined CDT-Africa Clinical trials program in 2019.

CDT-Africa News: How do you describe the program? Did it meet your expectations?

Hanna: The program was excellent. I got to meet new people from different regions. The program was really interesting; the instructors were excellent and very well-experienced in the field. I can see myself working in clinical trials in Africa in the future.

CDT-Africa News: Why did you choose clinical trials for your Master's studies?

After I graduated from School, I worked as a Research Assistant at a biomedical research Centre in Eritrea. I had exposure to interventional studies incorporating both public health and clinical trials. I found that very interesting. It fitted me and what I want to do in the future. I believe it is about time for Africa to produce its own drugs, its own vaccines, and engage in its own research. I think a lot of researchers, especially women researchers should be invested in that field because that is the way to alleviate the burdens such as HIV, TB an Malaria in Africa. We have to have African solution. So I think the program is excellent. It fitted my career goals.

CDT-Africa News: What are your career goals?

Hanna: In the long term, my colleagues and I want to establish an Africa-based Clinical Research Organization that will collaborate with other pharmaceutical companies and engage in African-based research. That is the long-term plan. In the meantime, I want to involve in various clinical trial research linked with public health interventions focusing on the major burdens of Africa such as Malaria, HIV and TB.



Hanna Amanuel Tesfahunei

CDT-Africa News: what are the challenges you had to overcome during COVID-19 and complete the program?

Hanna: COVID-19 has disrupted everything globally. As a result, our studies were pushed on a bit at the start of the pandemic in Ethiopia. But we made adjustments and our program didn't stop. I am really glad that we managed to do our program. We got through it together; we did it right on schedule. The fact that we finish the program on time is a huge success.

CDT-Africa wishes Hanna and the rest of the graduates success on their future endeavours.

The Centre is now accepting applications for MSc in Clinical Trials program to the academic year 2021/22 (2014 E.C). **The application process is available [online](#). The deadline for applications is 20 August 2021.**

Announcements

Call for applicants for MSc in Clinical Trials 2021/22 Program

The Centre for Innovative Drug Development and Therapeutic Trials for Africa (CDT-Africa) is a World-Bank supported Africa centre of excellence for higher education and research at the College of Health Sciences, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Centre aims to improve access to health care through novel medical discoveries (medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, care delivery mechanisms) supported by clinical trials.



As one of the main strategies to achieve this goal, the Centre is providing Master's program in Clinical Trials, the first of its kind in the Region. The program's overall aim is to prepare competent individuals who would work in research institutions, academia, pharmaceutical industries, regulatory agencies, contract research organizations, and other study centres, with the primary objective of assisting with the designing, execution and reporting of clinical trials pertaining to drugs, diagnostics, vaccines, behavioural interventions and medical devices commensurate with good clinical practice, legal, ethical, and regulatory requirements. The Centre is accepting applicants for the MSc in Clinical Trials program to the academic year 2021/22 (2014 E.C).

Program description

- The MSc program is designed to meet the highest international standards of training for MSc in Clinical Trials. It is a two years program with 99 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) consisting of 59 ECTS general and specialized subject area modules, 2 ECTS seminar works, 8 ECTS attachments, and 30 ECTS MSc research project work.
- The program will be delivered in full time mode in a modular block teaching approach.

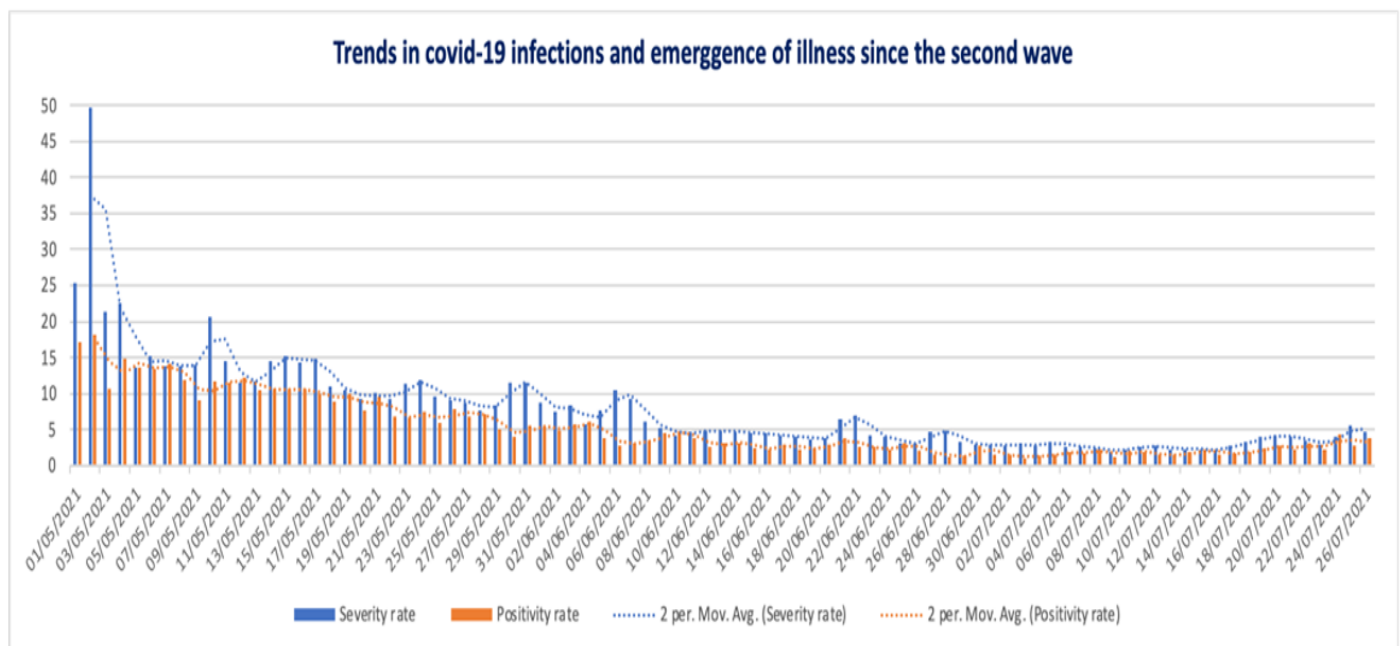
Application

- Application must be submitted online using the graduate application portal of the Addis Ababa University Office of the Registrar. Details of the application process is available [online](#):
- Additionally, CV and motivation letter must be submitted in electronic copy via email to Dr. Tsegahun Manyazewal (email: tsegahunm.cdtafrica@gmail.com) copying Bethelhem Fekadu email: betty.cdtafrica@gmail.com).
- Non-Ethiopian applicants should submit their documents using the email addresses stated above.
- The deadline for applications is 20 August 2021.
- Female applicants are highly encouraged to apply.

The application process is available [online](#): The deadline for applications is 20 August 2021.

Time to urgently reinforce COVID-19 public control measures

Ethiopia has enjoyed a relatively low COVID-19 infection since the end of the second wave in early May 2021 (Figure below). These low rates of infection were associated with steady decline in rates of severe illness and hospital admissions. The changes happened despite the naturally low vaccination rates in the country, the return of people to regular daily activities and clear opportunities for people to congregate and increase risk of infection, for example, during the election. The main control mechanism that was enforced, at least in Addis Ababa, was wearing of face coverings.



Covid19 positivity and severity rate

Unfortunately, since mid-July, there is a subtle but steady resurgence of infection rates with a parallel increase in severe illness. Given the spread of the more infectious Delta variant across the world, this variant is likely to be the cause of this subtle increase. To avoid a third wave, or at least to have a low peak, public control measures should be enforced again. Face coverings remain the most practical and relatively easy public control method to implement. Vaccinated people should also continue to wear face masks given the risk of infection and transmission from the Delta variant among vaccinated people.

CDT-Africa was established as an Africa Centre of Excellence to build endogenous expertise in Africa to address the development challenge posed by poor access to drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics in the continent.

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