

# Merck Foundation Marks ‘World Cancer Day 2018’ in Uganda and Tanzania

*Merck Foundation conducts post-training evaluation for their first graduate of ‘Merck Oncology Fellowship Program’ in Tanzania*

DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA, February 8, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [-Merck Foundation](https://www.einpresswire.com/) commits to a long-term partnership with Uganda minister of health through providing one and two years oncology fellowship in India, Egypt, and Malaysia for Ugandan doctors. -Following the ‘We Can. I can’ theme of ‘World Cancer Day 2016–18’ Merck Foundation commits to building cancer care capacity in Africa and developing countries.

Merck Foundation, a non-profit company and a subsidiary of Merck KGaA Germany marks ‘World Cancer Day 2018’ to create awareness around cancer and build cancer care capacity with the aim to increase the limited number of oncologists across Africa and developing countries.

The CEO of Merck Foundation Dr. Rasha Kelej recently visited Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Science, Tanzania to meet the alumni of ‘Merck Oncology Fellowship Program’ with the aim to evaluate the impact of the one and two-year medical oncology fellowship programs conducted in Tata memorial center in India. Through ‘Merck Oncology Fellowship Program’ foundation has trained the first medical oncologist in Tanzania, Dr. Christina V. Malichewe.



Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation addressing the community meeting with the Hon. Sarah Opendi, Minister of State of Health for Uganda.



Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation with the Reginald N. Natal a former cancer patient treated by Dr. Christina V. Malichewe, alumni of ‘Merck Oncology Fellowship Program’ and the first medical oncologist from Tanzania.

During her visit to Tanzania, Dr. Rasha Kelej emphasized, “We strongly believe that building professional capacity is the right strategy to improve access to quality and equitable cancer care in the continent. Dr. Christina is one of the 59 future oncologists, Merck Foundation has committed to

training for Africa.”

In June 2017, BIO Ventures for Global Health (BVGH), and the African Organization for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC), released a white paper on the African continent’s emerging cancer crisis.

Over 20% of African countries have no access to cancer treatments at all, while access is limited and sporadic in other countries. Later-stage diagnosis in African patients contributes to poorer outcomes. For example, 5-year female breast cancer relative survival rates are 46% in Uganda and 12% in The Gambia, compared with around 90% in developed countries.



Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation with 'Merck More Than a Mother' Heroines, Uganda

The first medical oncologist in Tanzania, Dr. Christina V. Malichewe said, “I can now make difference for my patients. We don’t have medical oncology to manage patients through chemotherapy, we only have clinical oncologists and radiotherapists. Thus, one-year medical oncology fellowship in India has enabled me to save many lives, every day. Thanks to Merck Foundation for this opportunity in Tanzania.”

During her meeting with Dr. Christina, Dr. Rasha Kelej said “I’ve enjoyed every moment with her, witnessing the great impact she makes every day on her patients’ lives. Through her, we transform people’s lives every day.”

Hon. Sarah Opendi, Uganda Minister of State of Health said, “Merck Foundation and ministry of health of Uganda have been partners for a very long time, we have been working together on various issues with special focus on cancer and infertility. We appreciate the efforts of Merck Foundation in building cancer care capacity in Uganda and other African countries, and we hope soon we would have world class cancer facilities and expert locally in our beloved country.”

The first fellow for ‘Merck Oncology Fellowship Program’ from Uganda Dr. Sekitene Seei Buwambaza said, “Merck Oncology Fellowship program is very important to me because it is giving me an opportunity to learn and improve on the way, I have been doing things concerning the management of cancer patients. It is also ushering me into the new trend that cancer care and research is taking in this 21st century. A bond with Merck Foundation as an alumnus is going to keep me updated with new developments in cancer care.”

Fellowship Program’ from Uganda, Dr. Musana Othiniel, an obstetrician and gynaecologist from Uganda, “Uganda as a country lacks a national cancer screening program yet cervical cancer and breast cancer remains the most common cancers and accounts for the highest proportion of cancers requiring treatment. The country also has a shortage of good gynaecology clinicians, researchers and educators in Uganda hence limiting access for women with cancer to screening, diagnostic and treatment services.”

He further added, “The ‘Merck Oncology Fellowship Program’ will expand my knowledge on the selection of appropriate clinical and research methodology used in gynae-oncology. I hope to improve

my skills in carrying out appropriate and evidence-based clinical diagnosis and treatment but also empower me with excellent clinical education skill to mentor other young health workers in gynaecology. “

While Appreciating the efforts of Merck Foundation, Dr. Damas Dukundane, Merck Foundation oncology fellow from Rwanda said “When the right people are in charge then the right things happen. I am so excited to be part of this journey of change makers, where the history will remember us as the Merck Foundation fellows, who improved the lives of people with cancer in Africa, in the 21st century “

Moreover, 50 future oncologists either joined or will join one, two or three years ‘Merck Oncology Fellowship Program’ from many sub-Saharan African countries out of which, countries such as Gambia and Liberia never had oncologists.

Merck Foundation will provide eight doctors from both Uganda and Tanzania with one -year medical oncology fellowship program. Furthermore, together with the University of Nairobi, Merck Foundation established the first two-year medical oncology fellowship program for Sub-Saharan Africa.

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