

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF ALLIED HEALTH



آغا خان یونیورسٹی
THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY



Dean's Vision

Dr Adil Haider

“The field of allied health is wide ranged. Allied health professionals are part of a workforce that are central to any healthcare system. My vision of establishing the office of allied health was to structure all the programs that are undertaken in our academic medical center under one umbrella. The journey has just begun, and we are pulling all resources together to explore how existing programs can be aligned to the academics and which new programs can be taken up to serve the broader academia, allied health professionals, and the community.”



Message by the Associate Dean Allied Health

Dr Robyna Irshad Khan

Dear Colleagues,

A very happy and prosperous new year to you all!

After joining the inaugural position of the Associate Dean of Allied Health in January 2022, I have been asked the question frequently, “who are allied health professionals?” This is a good opportunity to answer this; Allied health includes a large group of health care professionals that are distinct from medicine and nursing. These professionals support health care systems in a variety of settings ranging from preventive health to care provision for chronic health conditions. They are an integral part of modern health care delivery systems and include nutritionists, dietitians, neurophysiology technologists, anesthesia technicians, operating room technologists, physiotherapists, occupational and speech therapists, pharmacists, oncology technologists, radiographers, sonographers, nuclear medical technologists, dental hygienists and dental assistants, social workers, respiratory therapists, optometrists, chiropractors,

podiatrists, audiologists and speech language pathologists, diagnostic medical personnel (medical laboratory scientists, cytogenetic technologists, diagnostic molecular scientists, histotechnologists, and pathologists' assistants), physician assistants, emergency medical personnel, health information technologists, medical coders, cancer registry coders, health educators (asthma educators, diabetes educators), counsellors (genetic counsellors, mental health counsellors, family therapists), specialists in cancer diagnosis and treatment (medical physicists, medical dosimetrists, and radiation therapists), and many other healthcare providers and support personnel.

In AKU Karachi, currently 25 allied health programs enrolling 100 plus trainees are being managed and organized by 14 departments. This report details the journey of our first year in the office.

We are planning to share our progress with you every year.

Looking Back to When We Started

The OAH was conceptualized by the Dean Medical College in July 2021 and an assistant manager was appointed to advance the concept. A committee was constituted to select the candidate for the foundational Associate Dean position, to establish the office. The OAH was formalized in January 2022 with following members:

The OAH started its journey by conducting situational analysis of the existing allied health [AH] programs.



The OAH team

Dr Robyna Irshad Khan
Associate Dean
Dr Shelina Bhamani
Associate Director
Ms. Zaibunissa Karim
Assistant Manager

Situational Analysis

Two steps were taken to understand the situation on ground; first, data collection about the existing AH programs by meeting with all the program leads, where the meetings were recorded with permission, and minutes sent back to the program directors for verification, and second, meeting with the enrolled students. At present, 14 departments are offering 25 training programs out of which 12 are of two years duration, nine are one year certificate programs, and four are of less than one year duration.

OAH team met with enrolled trainees of all programs to introduce the OAH, its role and functions, and to understand students' issues, concerns, and prospects. There were altogether five meetings, in which 105 students from 10 departments (Medicine, Surgery, Anaesthesiology, Pediatrics, and Child Health, HIMS, Clinical Laboratory, Oncology, Pharmacy, Radiology, and Nutrition and Food Services) participated. Students informed the OAH team that this was the first opportunity for them during their training to come together at a platform and share their experiences.



OAH team meeting with the Clinical Laboratory and Dental Hygiene students

Central Organization and Standardization

OAH functions on the 'Hub and Spokes' model where the OAH is the Hub, and 14 departments where AH training programs are being offered, are the spokes. The responsibilities of the Hub are to standardize the training, ensure quality through internal and external program audits, facilitate in curriculum development and review, collaborate with provincial and national licensing and accreditation bodies, develop relevant policy and guidelines, and facilitate incorporation of e-health and blended learning. The responsibilities of the spokes are to ensure compliance with standards, develop curricula according to the given format, provide didactic education and skill training, ensure timely evaluations and assessments, help develop career trajectories for AH trainees, and offer regular CME opportunities. Allied Health Education Committee (AHEC) was established to operationalize the responsibilities of the OAH. Departments are represented on the AHEC by the program directors, selected through a uniform process. OAH developed guidelines and a uniform template to develop standardized program curricula. The curriculum is to be developed by the subject experts within the relevant department, approved by AHEC and OAH for the certificate of training to be awarded jointly by medical college and hospital. Four program curriculums have been developed and approved so far with three more programs under review.

Allied Health Education Committee [AHEC]

The committee is chaired by the Associate Dean AH working under the Academic Health Center, Pakistan. The terms of reference of the committee include supporting the OAH in educational administration and governance, working as core advisors to strengthen educational development of AH programs, ideation on research and innovations in the field, facilitating activities directed towards raising the profile of AH professionals [AHP], and advocating for them through local, regional, and global partnerships and collaborations. Members of the committee are program directors of all AH training programs, representation from SONAM, CEO's office, the secondary hospitals, and the associate dean, associate director, and assistant manager OAH. The committee is meeting once a month to achieve the mandate, so far six meetings have been held.

Allied Health Faculty Development

Various avenues were explored to facilitate the development of allied health faculty. Three members from operating rooms, anesthesiology, and radiology were nominated for Rethinking Teaching Workshop [RTT] offered by the Network of Quality, Teaching and Learning (QTL_net) with an option of facilitation of more potential faculty members to attend workshops/courses offered within the university. Additionally, a basic course was offered by the OAH on Designing Allied Health Education Programs.

The course was attended by 14 participants from five different departments i.e., anesthesiology, medical laboratory, nutrition, pediatrics, and nursing education services. Course started on August 12, 2022 and was completed on September 30, 2022. It was offered as eight short workshops covering a range of topics on planning and designing academic programs, concept note and financial feasibility, designing learning objectives, student and faculty engagement activities, gamification in education, social media advocacy, and planning professional development courses. 100% satisfaction feedback was received from the participants. The following were the course faculty:



Participants of the basic course on Designing Allied Health Education Programs, with the faculty.

Dr Shelina Bhamani, Dr Salima Ali Bhai, Ms Zaibunissa Karim, Amin Shah. Hussain Karmiani, Maryam Ahmed, Naureen Shah, Dr Robyna Irshad Khan, Sadia Fatima, Suroor Ansari

Currently, a subcommittee of AHEC is working to formulate the criteria for AH faculty which once approved, will also enlist the career trajectory for AH faculty.

Collaboration and Networking

OAH invited the team of Sindh Board of Technical Education (SBTE) to AKU for exchange of ideas. Chairman Dr Masroor Ahmed and inspection officer Mr. Akhtar Shah from SBTE, Dr Adil Haider, Dr Robyna Irshad Khan, Dr Shelina Bhamani and Zaibunissa Karim from AKU attended the meeting. Another meeting was held with Aga Khan Education Board (AKEB) to discuss the scholarships and other financial support avenues available for the youth who are interested in the field of allied health. Chairperson AKEB Dr Zahra Ladhani, Mr Akbar Ladak, and Dr. Shafique Khoja attended the meeting. Virtual meetings were held with Punjab Medical Faculty and Baluchistan Medical Faculty to develop networking across all provinces, keeping in mind that AKU is a federal university, training students from all provinces.



Visit of the SBTE team

Medical Laboratory Technologist Program [MLT] received endorsement with SBTE in October 2022 after due process.



SBTE evaluators' visit to AKU

Accreditation of Pharmacy Residency Program by ASHP

The Department of Pharmacy is in the process of aligning its training program with American Society of Health System Pharmacists (ASHP) standards. The residency program was audited by the ASHP team in August. After a successful audit, the audit team recommended the program for the accreditation to its board of directors. AKUH-K will be the first institution to recruit and train 25 residents in a single residency program.



Pharmacy team for the ASHP accreditation

Making Allied Health Visible

One of the main goals of the OAH is to raise the profile of allied health professionals and give visibility to the existing training programs. Various initiatives are planned in year 2022 to advance this goal including publication of awareness articles in the print, electronic, and digital media, encouraging representations on various university committees and forums, holding multiple AH CME and awareness events, and celebrating AHP day. First AHP day was celebrated on October 14, 2022.

1.1st Allied Health Professionals' Day

The OAH celebrated the AHP day to showcase AH programs. It was the first such event in the history of the AKU for AHP. More than 200 professionals and trainees attended the program held on October 14, 2022, with the theme of "Showcasing Allied health Professions". The event showcased all the training programs in as poster displays, in addition to inviting creative arts and reels submissions. The event started with an open-air breakfast followed by two hours program. CEO-AKU, Dr Shahid Shafi, welcomed the participants and spoke about the significance of AHP in provision of safe care. Dr Robyna Irshad Khan gave a talk on "AKU's Allied Health Programs Through Strategic Approach and Innovation" followed by the keynote speech by Dr Masroor Shah, Director SBTE. Panel discussion on "Allied Health Professionals: Experiences and Challenges" moderated by Dr Shelina Bhamani invited interactive discussion among the participants and panelists. Best poster, reel, and creative art project winners were awarded trophies. Certificates were distributed to the first cohort of the faculty training workshop. The program ended with a closing note by the CMO Dr Asim Belgaumi.



CEO-AKU welcoming the participants of the 1st AHP day



Creative artwork by AHPs



Department of Clinical Laboratories won the award for best model



Department of Nutrition and Food services won the award for best creative artwork



Participants at the 1st allied health professionals' day



Department of Anesthesiology, OR, and CSSD won the award for best one minute reel

2. Allied Health Events by Departments

- i. Department of Health Information and Management Systems [HIMS] HIMS Cancer registry team organized an awareness session for HIMS staff in the month of October that included distributing awareness flyers and encouraging active participation by wearing pink-themed outfits and the famous cancer awareness pink ribbons.



HIMS department breast cancer awareness event

- ii. Nutrition and Food Service Department [NFSD] World Diabetes Day was celebrated in the month of November. A camp set up by dietitians and nutrition staff showcased different food groups, Do's, and Don'ts of diabetic diet, simplified by games and worksheets. General guidelines were provided for prevention of the condition and individualized dietary education according to the needs of the participants.



World Diabetic day by the Department of NFSD

- iii. Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and Clinical Laboratories The Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and Clinical Laboratories, AKUH arranged an appreciation evening on October 14 to recognize the hard work and efforts of the Allied Health Professionals of the department.



Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and Clinical Laboratories- appreciation event

- iv. Department of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Around 20 CME sessions, 5 workshops on pain management, bio-mechanics, work ergonomics, Kinesio-Taping and neuro rehabilitation and specialized trainings with international facilitators from USA, UK and Egypt were arranged to enhance knowledge and skills related to the field. AHPs also contributed through community awareness programs on various topics via official social media platforms.



CME session for the AHPs

- v. Department of Radiology
Annual appreciation event was celebrated by the department to recognise the contribution of radiographers that included award ceremony and live performances. Mr Wali ur Rehman (Trainee Radiographer) got Best Trainee Radiographer Award.



Annual appreciation evening of the Department of Radiology

- vi. Department of Anaesthesiology, OR, and CSSD
The department has three allied health specialties: anesthesia technicians, operating room technicians, and central sterile services technicians [CSSD]. Basic workshops on 'Professional Attributes' and 'Care and Maintenance of Instrument' were organized for CSSD technicians. Anesthesia technicians' day was celebrated to appreciate and recognized



Anesthesia technicians' day celebration



12th CME conference for the Anesthesia and Critical care AHPs



BLS workshop



CME workshop for CSSD staff

vii. Dental Hygiene Program

Dental Hygiene Program celebrated National Children's Dental Health Month (February 2022), World Oral Health Day (March 2022), and National Dental Hygiene Month (October 2022). The objective of the activities was to create awareness on the importance of oral health which is a gateway to overall health. To empower people with knowledge, skills, and confidence to secure good oral health.



Celebrating World Oral Health Day at AKU Jena Bai Building

ix. Department of Pediatric and Child health Annual pediatric appreciation evening was celebrated in the month of October to recognize exceptional work of AHPs. Zamzama Rashid received gold medal and high-performance certificate, Hina Ali received silver medal and appreciation certificate for presenting research paper at 17th Asia Pacific Congress of Pediatrics 2022, Lahore. Huda Qadeer received bronze medal

viii. Pharmacy Services

The department celebrated World Pharmacist Day on November 26. The theme this year was 'Pharmacy United in Action for a Healthier World!'. Ms Hafsa Ashfaq was invited from pharmacy department-AKUH to FM 107's show "Mukammal Ghar" to discuss the importance and role of pharmacists in improving the health outcomes of patients and issues related to medications and their usage. AKUH-K celebrated World Antimicrobial Week from November 18-24. The theme this year was 'Preventing Antimicrobial Resistance Together'. Pharmacy department generated informative flyers and conducted daily online quizzes. A CME Session was conducted for all healthcare professionals to discuss the role of antibiotic stewardship program in prevention of antimicrobial resistance, role of healthcare professionals in antibiotic stewardship program and how to promote and encourage the judicious use of antimicrobials.

along with Nasreen Gulzar receiving high performance certificate by the department. Allied health program director Vardah Bharuchi presented her research on Quality of Life of Parents of Children with Disabilities Using WHOQOL, BREF, during COVID 19 Pandemic in 24th Biennial International Pediatric Conference and Annual Research Week 2022, Department of Pediatrics and Child Health.



World Pharmacist Day celebration



World Antimicrobial Week

