

Karnali Academy of Health Sciences - Clearing Out Karnali's Limbo and yet more to go.

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When a pregnant woman was being carried in a *DOKO* through the treacherous landscape in search of medical help, who had ever thought that the province will be producing doctors for the country someday, and yes the day came. However, it is a matter of great pride that the province where the health personnel used to feel disappointed when being placed, now produces the same manpower that can be placed all over the country. KAHS is working to uplift health services, education, and medical research in the Karnali region for a decade. Now, it has become the only center in the province to run five bachelor's and four master's level health education programs including MBBS and MD/MS. The five bachelor programs are MBBS, BPH, BMS, BNS, and BPharm, and four post-graduate level MD/MS programs in Pediatrics, Anesthesiology, General Practice, Emergency Medicine, and Orthopedics. Furthermore, MD/MS in Gynae./Obs., Surgery, Basic Medical Sciences like Anatomy, Physiology, etc., MPH (Master of Public Health), MSc Epidemiology, and MN (Master of Nursing) are in the process of taking approval from the medical education commission (MEC) in the following years.

KAHS has been working in the field of quality health care service to fulfill the constitutional provision of Nepal which states that every citizen shall have equal rights for free basic health services, and no one shall be deprived of emergency health care services.¹ KAHS was established on October 20, 2011 (2068/07/03), by an Act of the parliament of Nepal by upgrading the existing Karnali Zonal Hospital at Jumla with three main goals to enable access to quality healthcare services and education for the people of backward (Pichhadiyako) areas in affordable cost. Health Research, medical education, and health care services are the main pillar of KAHS to achieve its goal.

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Despite its significant aim to provide health services, its appropriate location in the province and its ultimate need in the province, and its ultimate effect on the health and development indicators, KAHS has been progressing a lot in the field of health service delivery, and health education despite facing many hurdles and still has a very big responsibility to carry on in future.² The health service provided by KAHS has been extended. The consultant service for dermatology, ophthalmology, ENT, histopathology laboratory, and neonatal unit for neonates and newborns has been extended apart from other regular services. Similarly, there has been an increment of 25-bed HDU service to 50 beds, 6 bedded medical ICU, the extension of Oxygen availability in 180 beds, and the addition of 6 ventilators that make up 18 ventilators in the hospital to date has made the service more advanced. We are coordinating and collaborating with other district hospitals of Humla, Mugu Dolpa, and Jajarkot to fulfill the needed health manpower. Besides this, KAHS has planned to make its service of KAHS digitalized.

Research is another major pillar of KAHS. The treacherous terrain of Karnali is rich in natural diversities. The herbs, climates, and life in Karnali are themselves a great subject to be researched. Karnali is famous for the abundance of many valuable herbs like Yarsagumba, Paanchaunle (*Dactylorhiza Hatagirea*), *Baghejadi*, *Ninaijadi*, *Pakhanved*, *Kamalved*, *Bikhma*, *Guchhichayau* (*Morchella Mushroom*), *Katuko*, *Satochini*, *Chiraito*, *Padamchal*, *Wild Garlic*, *Bhutkesh*, *Jatamasi*, etc. The local herbs in Karnali can be a real boon for the whole country. The establishment of an herbal collection and processing center can uplift the economy of this province, which can eradicate poverty in this province. To encourage our faculties to research studies, KAHS established an IRC (Institutional Review Committee, a wing of Nepal Health

Research Council (NHRC) that provide the ethical clearance for the research conducted in Karnali, and we are providing the faculty research grant to promote the research from the faculties. Apart from this, KAHS has started its official scientific journal; the Journal of Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (JKAHS) in 2018.

Indeed, it was not easy to reach this phase and we have a lot more to go. On top of that, the most important responsibility is to maintain and sustain what we have achieved till now. This improvement and sustainability is never a single-handed job. Despite the plenty of hurdles, KAHS can achieve remarkable progress to strengthen the health care services through education and research with the support of authorities and stakeholders and we hope to get tremendous financial support to sustain and further the progress of this organization. Despite these improvements and additional services, there are many hurdles. We still lack many things to strengthen the infrastructure to run our academic program and service as well. Faculty retention is the major problem to run the academy and its services smoothly.

Even after 44 years of the Alma Ata Declaration, still there is huge inequality in access to health care, distribution of health-related services, and manpower production between Urban and rural Nepal, which is politically, socially, and economically unacceptable. To address this, the Government of Nepal, however, has endorsed the Public Health Service Act 2018 to regulate the responsibilities of every health institution preserving the rights of the service recipients. To achieve goals directed by our Constitution, national health policy, and acts, there must be robust support from all tiers of governments, civil society, and stakeholders to the institution like the Karnali Academy of Health Science.

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