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## Ghana hosts seminar on malaria, sleeping sickness

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Story: Daniel Nkrumah

**A**N international seminar to facilitate deeper research into the causes of malaria and sleeping sickness has opened at the Biochemistry Department of the University of Ghana, Legon.

The gathering of scientists, who are members of the American Society for Cell Biology from across the globe is also aimed at deepening interest in research into other disease-causing organisms.

Drawn from countries such as the US, Britain and France, the scientists are conducting a workshop on the cell biology of trypanosome, the organism that causes trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) and the plasmodium, the causative organism of malaria.

The workshop is the first West African Regional Workshop on the cell biology of protozoan pathogens and is being sponsored by the American Society for Cell Biology, University of Ghana, Legon, Olympus, Carnegie Corporation of New York and BioMalPar.

At the opening of the 10-day workshop, the Deputy Minister of Education (Tertiary), Dr Joseph Annan, noted that the choice of malaria and trypanosomiasis as the focus of the training was not accidental.

"The impact of malaria alone on the lives and economies of most tropical regions of the world takes hours to describe. It is a major limitation to development of our communities," the minister noted.

He said microbial agents affected water quality and safety, and also accounted for a substantial spoilage of crops and food, adding that while some cells such as those involved in nitrogen fixation were beneficial, the impact of the disease-causing organisms made such benefits insignificant.

The deputy minister said it was time for the country to change her approach to the study of microbial parasites and indicated that it was, therefore, appropriate for tertiary institutions to change their curricula and programmes to meet the new challenges.

Dr Annan said the workshop provided an opportunity for the Education Ministry, together with the Ministry of Health, to emphasise the need for more comprehensive studies into issues of disease not just in the country but on the continent as a whole.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana, Legon, Professor Kojo Yankah, noted that the choice of the University of Ghana as the site for the first sub-regional workshops on cell biology should not come as a surprise, considering the major strides made in scientific teaching and research at the university and the continued choice of the university as the seat for several sub-regional research networks and centres of excellence.

The Head of the Biochemistry Department of the University of Ghana, Professor Sammy Sackey, told the *Daily Graphic* that participants drawn from the West African sub-region had had renewed interest in scientific research with a better appreciation of the activities of the cell.

Professor Keith Gull, Professor of Molecular Biology at the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology, University of Oxford, and David S. Roos, Merriam Professor of Biology and the Director of Genomics Institute at the University of Pennsylvania are two of the professors conducting the workshop.

They told the *Daily Graphic* that the workshop was aimed at educating and exposing young African scientists to cutting-edge scientific research.

They said the continent did not lack bright students with the interest and commitment needed, but stressed the need to provide the students with the kind of environment that would help harness their potential.

## Microscope gift to Biochemistry Dept

*SOME participants in an international seminar on cell biology held at the Biochemistry Department of the University of Ghana (UG) pose behind a \$100,000 microscope donated by Oxford University to the department.*

*From left are Professor Keith Gull, a professor of Molecular Biology at Oxford University, Professor Sammy Sackey, Head of the Biochemistry Department at UG, Eva Gluenz and Bill Wickstead (both scientists from Oxford University) and Dr Jonathan Adjimani, a lecturer at the Biochemistry Department of the University of Ghana.*

*Earlier, another microscope donated by Olympus through the American Society for Cell Biology and dozens of cell biology books were presented by Prof. Dick McIntosh on behalf of the society to the Biochemistry Department of the UG.*

