

# Maintaining excellence in Teaching of Human Anatomy: University of Nairobi Experience

## **Abstract:**

Experience in maintaining excellence in teaching of human anatomy is important in informing strategies to mitigate worldwide decline in the level of knowledge of human anatomy among medical students and qualifying doctors. Factors responsible for the decline include reduction in teaching time, inadequate teachers and undermining of cadaver dissection. Measures to address these challenges have resulted in wide disparities in curriculum design, teaching methods, number and composition of instructors. Despite the challenges of rising student numbers and staff shortages, the Department of Human Anatomy of the University of Nairobi has maintained excellence in teaching for over 40yrs. This article describes the teaching of anatomy at the University with a view of elucidating the practices from which other departments can learn. Analysis reveals that human anatomy is allocated 630hrs per year of which 350hrs are assigned to gross anatomy with 270hrs devoted to dissection. Although dissection has remained the cornerstone of instruction, it is combined with problem based learning, use of prosections, diagnostic imaging, computer aided and small group teaching. Teaching of gross anatomy is integrated with microscopic, developmental and neuroanatomy. The department runs an intercalated Bachelor of Science degree program, which is a reliable source of members of staff. Over 70% of the staff are surgeons. They are assisted by demonstrators drawn from trainee surgeons and B.Sc. Anatomy graduates. Excellence in teaching anatomy can be maintained by reclaiming sufficient teaching time, combining dissection with other contemporary methods of instruction, integrating gross, microscopic, developmental anatomy, neuroanatomy, involvement of clinicians in teaching, commencing training anatomy early and engagement of demonstrators.