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Research4life: access to research in the developing world

<http://www.research4life.org>

In resource-poor settings of developing countries, where published data are often unavailable, “even a single article can change best medical practice on the ground”. This is what Dr Tim Meade says about HINARI, describing how free access to this database has allowed its group to improve paediatric HIV/AIDS clinical care in Zambia.

HINARI, the programme for Access to Research in Health (www.who.int/hinari) managed by the World Health Organization, includes 13,000 journals (in 30 languages), up to 28,800 e-books, and up to 70 other information resources from 160 publishing partners. It also has a training section, where many resources are provided for users and institutions, and offers additional materials and links useful to authors and editors. For example, the HINARI Authorship Skills contains modules to assist authors with links to materials on how to write and publish, intellectual propriety (including copyrights, authorship, and plagiarism), and web bibliography.

HINARI is just one of the programmes launched by Research4life, which enhances research by connecting academics, researchers, and policy makers in low- and middle-income countries. Overall, Research4life provides access to over 44,000 peer-reviewed international scientific journals, books, and databases, with resources available in several languages, which are searchable by keyword, subject category, author, and language. There are other related programmes:

- AGORA (Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture, www.aginternetwork.org), which accesses more than 5,200 journals and 4,200 e-books in agriculture, fisheries, food, nutrition, veterinary science, biological, environmental, and social science.
- OARE (Online Access to Research in the Environment, www.oaresciences.org), with more than 5,500 journals and 14,000 e-books in a wide range of disciplines of the natural environment, from climatology to environmental biotechnology.
- ARDI (Access to Research for Development and Innovation, <http://www.wipo.int/ardi>), a programme aimed at promoting the integration of developing and less developed countries into the global knowledge economy.

A specific section of the website explains the criteria by which countries or institutions are eligible for Research4life free access and the FAQ section summarizes technical

requirements for accessing the content. Currently, registrations from individuals are not accepted, and only universities, teaching hospitals, libraries, or non-governmental organizations can have access.

Another section describes how private publishers or institutions can support this initiative, mainly freely sharing their contents. Future goals include the engagement of new technology partners who can offer access to content via mobile devices and offline. Such services help to increase the recognition of Research4Life amongst researchers, editors, and librarians by effective marketing and promotion.

In addition to the programmes mentioned, Research4Life provides links to many other initiatives, which allow users from developing countries to access online journals free or at low-cost. For example, INASP (the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications) is of great interest not only to researchers, but also to editors and librarians, who can access training courses, such as an introduction to e-resource management or a workshop on e-journals and e-resources management for librarians.

Research4life aim is ambitious: “To improve the quality of research conducted in developing countries to help advance higher education, inform public policy decisions, and prepare tomorrow’s leader”. We hope that each of the Research4Life resources can be adequately supported by partners and funding agencies, so that it can realize its full potential.

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