



Pan-African Society for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery (PASCATS)
Société Panafricaine de Chirurgie Cardiothoracique (SPACCaT)

NEWSLETTER

Berlin, January 2019

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

An exciting, challenging and a successful year has come to an end. We are planning to face the challenges in the years ahead with diligence and determination, in the context of realizing our visions based on our valuable knowledge and scientific background.

Pan-African Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery has brought together active individual cardiothoracic surgeons of the international community including those practicing in Africa and in diaspora who contribute to cardiothoracic surgical practice and science to share their knowledge with the local teams and health authorities.

PASCATS enjoys and appreciate its partnership program since 2012 with the EACTS and AATS leadership in the context of facilitating joint educational programs during their annual meetings. The platform for interacting with international cardiovascular community interested in cardiovascular surgical challenges in underserved regions has supported our efforts in sharing specific problems in underserved regions, developing and strengthening existing networks for north-south and south-south cooperation during the annual meetings. Our last joint meetings were held during the:

**98th AATS annual meeting, 28 April–1 May 2018 in San Diego
AATS/PASCATS Global Forum on 29 April 2018: Enhancing Cardiovascular Education and Skill Training in Resource-Limited Underserved Regions. It was highlighted by discussions on**

infrastructural requirements and surgical standards to ensure surgical safety in developing countries.

32nd EACTS meeting, 18-20 October 2018 in Milan.

EACTS/PASCATS joint session on 18 October 2018: Contemporary quality cardiac surgery services in resource-limited setting.

The skill training project on simulators initiated by Prof. Smit would be of great value in the training programs in low-volume centres in Africa.

PASCATS welcomes “Intersociety Alliance” emerged from the Cape Town Declaration in December 2017. We look forward to the implementation of the envisaged projects and to achieving sustainable development goals for Africa in 2030.

In collaboration with the leadership of the German Heart Centre Berlin since 2014, we are able to establish a bridge from Berlin to Africa by a monthly clinical videoconference (Global Heart Forum), a distant outreach learning program with heart centres in Nigeria (Ile-Ife), Kenya (Nairobi) and South Africa (Bloemfontein and Durban). The regular videoconference has become an added value to the cardiovascular educational programs of PASCATS for the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

It is a global concern that many countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have inadequate qualified cardiologists to cope with the high demand of cardiovascular services. The cardiology capacity ranges from 1: 176,000 – 2.2 million people. In comparison, Ghana has the lowest cardiology capacity among Mozambique, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa. The situation therefore, demands immediate training programs in echocardiography to improve echocardiographic diagnostic services for the underserved population and to efficiently support postoperative cardiac surgical care.

Most physicians need to acquire knowledge in echocardiography because of challenges in the diagnosis and treatment of congenital heart (CHD) and rheumatic diseases (RHD), tuberculous constrictive pericarditis (CP), endomyocardial fibrosis (EMF),

arrhythmogenic, cardiomyopathies and heart failure due to degenerative valve (DVD) and ischemic heart diseases.

2017/2018, Phase I: We started our development project in cardiovascular medicine with a research program in Ghana in partnership with Edwards Foundation and in collaboration with German Heart Centre, private paediatric cardiology clinic in Berlin and Cape Coast Teaching Hospital on prevalence of rheumatic heart disease in Ghana (Phase I). The Berlin InterCor (PASCaTS' task force for cardiovascular missions) trained two local experienced nurses at the Cape Coast Teaching Hospital (CCTH) on pocket-size V-Scan echocardiography for this project. Under supervision by Prof. Charles Yankah, the local heart research team has screened 4,750 school children and adolescents for RHD in Ghana with a very low incidence of RHD. PASCaTS will present recommendations to the National Health Service/Ministry of Health for strengthening the strategies for awareness advocacy, prevention, treatment and eradication.

Phase II: National Capacity Building Program in Echocardiography & Cardiology

The phase II of its Africa project is to strengthen the cardiology program by providing echocardiography courses to many physicians mentored by cardiologists from Germany and South Africa. Volunteer cardiologists were recruited from the German Heart Centre Berlin, Berlin Private Paediatric Cardiology Clinic and Durban Heart Centre for the September and December courses in 2018. The courses will continue quarterly in 2019.

Objective: The objective is to strengthen the health system at secondary and tertiary level towards universal health coverage. The Phase II program will support the Phase III program to strengthen the existing cardiac surgery activities to promote universal health coverage including cardiac surgery at the regions (regionalization concept).

Health Insurance System for Universal Health Coverage: PASCaTS is focusing on four pillars to develop sustainable cardiovascular programs in SSA: Education, Inclusiveness and

Networking (civil society and professionals), Political and Economic Lobbies. Without a reasonable and cost-effective healthcare budget, health insurances scheme and low budget cardiac programs a universal health coverage at secondary and tertiary level can not be achieved. Therefore, an initiative “VICI” in collaboration with PASCATS, German Healthcare Partnership (GHP) and AfrikaVerein (AV) has been suggested to mobilize diaspora (indigenous economic powers) to finance health insurance of their families through their remittances to strengthen the national insurance scheme to booster cardiovascular healthcare services. The first meeting on this subject was held in Berlin in October during the 10th World Health Summit under the chairmanship of Ekow Yankah. It was attended by the Director General of Ghana Health Service, Dr. Nsia-Asare and the CEO of the National Health Insurance Authority, Dr. Annor. The follow-up meeting will take place in Ghana in spring 2019.

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On behalf of the executive board, I thank the leaderships of the our Cardiology Task Force 2018, German Heart Centre Berlin, AATS,

EACTS, their staff, the faculty members of our educational programs at the AATS and EACTS annual meetings, supporters of our projects in Africa, the heart screening team, School Health Education Program, the leadership of the CCTH in Ghana and Edwards Lifesciences Foundation for supporting our missions in Africa.

We are grateful to PASCaTS members and attendees of our meetings for supporting our educational programs. We thank all facilitators and the IT staff of the respective videoconference sites for their cooperation and support for the successful clinical video conferences in 2018.

Finally, the good news for the year 2019 is that as from 2019 PASCaTS will establish a training centre for echocardiography in Ghana and pursue on-site capacity building programs for Africa in collaboration with German and South African, Kenyan, Nigerian centres and PASCAR to establish sustainable cardiology programs that will support regional cardiac surgery programs.

We wish you and your family a happy and prosperous New Year in good health.

Charles Yankah

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