

Africa Partners 2005 Trip to Ghana

Our team comprised twelve physicians from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, Scott and White Clinic in Temple, TX, and the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD; a Clinical Trials Manager from Amgen in Thousand Oaks, CA, two nurses, a Basic Life Support instructor, computer engineer and two conference administrators. We traveled to Ghana from September, 30th 2005 to October 9th 2005 to present a continuing medical education conference in Kumasi, Ghana on October 3rd to 6th. The group included Drs. Larry Agodoa, Yaw Asare-Aboagye, Sam Forjuoh, Gil Grimes, Jim Homme, Jason Homme, Tom Mangan, Steven Merry, Steven Ytterberg, Lewis Roberts, Keith Plate, and Bruce Staats; trip administrators Lowell and Tricia Noreen; Basic Life Support instructor Brian Tommerdahl; hospital infection control specialist Brenda Staats; Mary Alice Trapp, an expert in breast and cervical cancer screening; and equipment and supplies coordinator Jeannie Byer. This year's meeting was co-sponsored by The Navigators Africa Partners group, Olmsted Outreach, and Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi.



Team member Brenda Staats presenting on Prevention of Blood Borne Infections

The conference was attended by about 130 physicians and other health personnel from Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, and Togo. Topics covered at the conference included advances in diagnosis and treatment of many common diseases, including heart, gastrointestinal, lung, kidney, and joint diseases. With assistance from others in the team, Brian Tommerdahl, Jim and Jay Homme, and Steve Merry held workshop sessions on Basic Life Support, Pediatric



Clockwise from left: Drs. Orkurga Malu, Fataho Buraima, Stephen Yohanna, Keith Plate & Steve Merry

Advanced Life Support, Obstetric Advanced Life Support, Obstetric & Abdominal Ultrasound, and Endoscopy. While the didactic sessions were well attended, the practical workshops were attended by an even larger group including physicians and several bus-loads of nurses from Komfo Anokye Hospital. In addition, Mary Alice Trapp held a very popular workshop for nurses and physicians for training in the detection of breast lumps. The breast cancer rate in women in Ghana is increasing, with many at an advanced stage at the time of diagnosis. Hopefully, the training received by these nurses and physicians will contribute towards the early detection and improved treatment of breast cancer to prevent the premature death of women.

The evaluations by conference attendees clearly indicate that the conference was of immense value to them. Many emphasized the need to continue to hold the conference annually. Several requested additional topics for the program. Others, on the other hand, thought that the conference was too packed and needed more time for discussion and questions. We will be addressing these suggestions as we plan the next conference.

Africa Partners was founded as a U.S. Navigator ministry in the mid-1980's. The medical arm of Africa Partners was initiated by Dr. Larry Ebert, a Navigator staff member and dentist in the Chicago area, to help build bridges to West African physicians and other health care providers. The goal of the group is to build relationships and provide resources to enable more effective delivery of health care. In honor of Drs. Larry Ebert and Patrick Twumasi, who died in a car accident during the 1996 Africa Partners Medical trip, the first Larry Ebert and Patrick Twumasi Memorial Lecture on Spirituality and Ethics in Medicine was presented by Dr. Abraham O. Malu from Jos, Nigeria during this year's conference. Dr. Malu spoke on the topic of Partnership and Service in Medicine.

Most West African countries do not currently have continuing education requirements for physician and nurses to maintain licensure, but these are being gradually implemented. Africa Partners anticipates continuing to help meet the medical education needs of West African health care professionals in future years by sending teams and partnering with medical professional organizations in the U.S. and Europe. The overarching goal of Africa Partners is to prevent needless death in Africans through education, training, and provision of necessary equipment and supplies to health care personnel in Africa.



The Conference Venue: Miklin Hotel, Kumasi



Workshop on Obstetric Ultrasound



Team members Brenda Staats and Mary Alice Trapp (on left) with conference participants



Pediatric Emergency Room Physician at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital



*Mayo Clinic Team Members:
Back – Bruce Staats, Jim Homme, Tom Mangan,
Front – Jay Homme, Steve Ytterberg, Steve Merry*



Dr. Yaw Asare-Aboagye from Amgen presenting on Clinical Trials

Finally, an episode at the teaching hospital on the last day of the conference emphasizes the practical value of these medical education conferences. On a tour of the emergency room, Drs. Jay and Jim Homme and Mr. Brain Tommerdahl encountered a child in the throes of a seizure who was being attended by the staff. They saw the life slowly ebbing from the child as the nurses attempted fruitlessly to resuscitate this child. Jim, Jay and Brian came alongside and helped coach the nurses on the best way to administer life support to this child. They were able to keep the child alive till an anesthetist arrived to intubate the child and to support her respiration. While the team is not sure what happened to this child subsequently, this is clearly one child whose life may have been saved by the team, and at the same time, the nurses on hand received real life training in administering life support which, hopefully, they will use to save other lives.

The Africa Partners CME team greatly appreciates your donations and prayer support that make these trips possible. While these gifts enable the team to go out and help others, each giver of support is ultimately contributing to something that is far greater than is immediately apparent and that has long term implications for improving the health of Africans. The goal of Africa Partners CME is to continue to provide annual conferences; however, we cannot do this without your support. As we approach the end of this year, please consider giving a regular monthly donation or a one-time gift towards future trips using the enclosed donation cards.

Once again, thank you very much for your kind support of Africa Partners CME.