

A proposal for the eradication of rheumatic fever in our lifetime

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The Pan African Society of Cardiology (PASCAR) convened the 1st All Africa Workshop on Rheumatic Fever (RF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) on 15 - 16 October 2005 at the Champagne Sports Resort, Drakensberg, South Africa. The purpose of the Workshop was to formulate an action plan for the prevention of RF and RHD in Africa. The gathering was a response to the new guideline on the control of RF and RHD by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2004.¹ The meeting (and this supplement) was made possible by the generous sponsorship of the national Department of Health of South Africa, the Medical Research Council of South Africa, the WHO Regional Office for Africa (WHO-AFRO) and the World Heart Federation, and endorsed by the Heart Foundation

of South Africa, the Paediatric Cardiac Society of South Africa, and the South African Heart Association. The other organisations represented at the meeting included the Africa Heart Network, the Nigerian Heart Foundation, and academics from the universities of Alexandria, Cape Town, Ghana, Ibadan, KwaZulu-Natal, Libreville, Limpopo, Nairobi, Pretoria, and Eduardo Mondlane University.

The meeting lived up to its name as the most representative African gathering ever held on the question of RF and RHD, with representatives from all the five regions of Africa, and from all major language regions of the continent (i.e. English, French, and Portuguese-speaking Africa) (Fig. 1). The 42 delegates were from Angola (1), Cameroon (1), Congo (1), Egypt



The delegates who participated in the 1st All Africa Workshop on Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease are:
Back row (left to right): Chapman Palweni, South Africa; Salah Zaher, Egypt; Jonathan Carapetis, Australia; Patrick Commerford, South Africa; Pierre Kombila-Koumba, Gabon; Kingsley Akinyore, Nigeria; Michael Dean, South Africa; Samuel Omokhodion, Nigeria; Albertino Damasceno, Mozambique; Wole Adebo, Nigeria; Baby Thomas, South Africa; Elijah Ogola, Kenya; Jonathan Matenga, Zimbabwe; Antonio Filipe, Angola; Robert de Souza, South Africa; John Lawrenson, South Africa; Pravin Manga, South Africa; Charles Bannerman, Zimbabwe; Chris Hugo-Hamman, South Africa; Albert Amoah, Ghana; Jimmy Volmink, South Africa.
Seated (left to right): Anne Croasdale, South Africa; Christelle Kotzenberg, South Africa; Kate Robertson, USA; Ana Mocumbi, Mozambique; Kathie Walker, South Africa; Antoinette Cilliers, South Africa; Tshimbi Mathioha, South Africa; Shan Biesman-Simons, South Africa; Sally Ann Jurgens-Clur, The Netherlands; Tiny Mokone, South Africa; Jenny Dean, South Africa.
Kneeling (left to right): Phindile Mntla, South Africa; Adrian Pearce, South Africa; Bongani Mayosi, South Africa; Avril Salo, South Africa; Ronnie Jardine, South Africa; Charles Wiysonge, Cameroon.

(1), Ghana (1), Mozambique (2), Nigeria (3), South Africa (27), and Zimbabwe (2). There were also speakers from Australia (1), the Netherlands (1), and the USA (1).

The scene for the main business of the meeting was set by a welcoming message from Professor Anthony MBewu, President of the Medical Research Council of South Africa, which was followed by a situational analysis of the epidemiology and treatment of the disease in South Africa (by Jurgens-Clur) and Nigeria (by Omokhodion), respectively. The intensive deliberations that ensued resulted in the adoption of the Drakensberg Declaration on the Control of Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease in Africa, a clarion call

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for action to prevent RF/RHD in all African countries. The proposed action plan, which is called the A.S.A.P. Programme, calls for efforts to increase Awareness of RF/RHD among the general public and practitioners; the establishment of Surveillance programmes to measure the burden of disease in the population; Advocacy to increase allocation of resources for the treatment of affected children and young adults; and the implementation of primary and secondary Prevention schemes in all countries of Africa.

The Pan African Society of Cardiology calls on all fraternal organisations and other members of the international community to join in this ambitious effort to rid Africa of the scourge of RF and RHD in our lifetime.

Reference

1. World Health Organization. Rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease. Report of a WHO Expert Consultation, Geneva, 29 October - 1 November 2001. http://www.who.int/cardiovascular_diseases/resources/trs923/en/ (last accessed 15 November 2005).