

Association for Academic Surgery - West Africa Task Force Report, October 2011

A. Peter Ekeh, MD & Jonathan Laryea, MD (Co-Chairs)

Lagos 2010

The Fourth Annual Fundamentals of Research and Career Development Course in West Africa took place between July 18th and 20th, 2011 at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria. The course was a successful collaboration between the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), the Lagos State University College of Medicine (LASUCOM) and our organization. For the third year running, we included a Minimally Invasive Workshop, which centered on basic laparoscopy and endoscopy. A Medical Student's Program was also introduced as an adjunct to the course.

Our joint hosts – LASUTH and LASUCOM provided a large amount of support for the course – including air transportation for 5 AAS faculty from the United States, as well as lodging and meals for the entire faculty for the duration of the course. They also provided good conference facilities, meals for participants along with local transportation and security for all the AAS visiting faculty.

Ten of our AAS members based here in the United States served as faculty for the course. Additional faculty with appropriate expertise were drawn locally from Nigeria (including one AAS member) as well as from the United Kingdom. A total of 51 participants attended the Fundamentals of Research Course from various regions of Nigeria although the majority present were from the host institutions. The participants were drawn from multiple specialties including General Surgery, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Plastic Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Urology, Otorhinolaryngology. Pediatrics and Internal Medicine. Three Doctors of Veterinary Medicine were also in attendance.

The Minimally Invasive Course involved didactic presentations followed by practical demonstration of some endoscopic and laparoscopic procedures. There were 30 participants.

The Medical Student Session, which was the first of its kind in the nation, addressed multiple relevant topics for Medical Students. A total of 95 students from 9 different medical schools from all over the Nigerian Federation attended. Locally relevant topics ranging from “Choosing a Mentor”, “Selecting a Specialty”, “Balancing Family Life with Career”, and “Preparing for Interviews” amongst several other topics were offered.

Participant Surveys

Overall, the course and the adjunct programs were very well received and appreciated as reflected in the surveys (summarized below) and glowing comments of appreciation on the evaluations.

<i>Please rate the following based on your overall experience at the conference:</i>							
Answer Options	Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	N/A	Respond Count
Overall Conference Value	0	0	3	14	17	0	34
Content of Conference	0	0	0	13	21	0	34
Quality of Visual Aids	0	0	1	21	12	0	34

TABLE 1. Evaluations by Course Participants

We would like to express our appreciation to the following faculty for their participation in this latest offering of the course. Their various contributions made the entire program a great success.

1. Scott LeMaire
2. Benedict Nwomeh
3. Oluyinka Olutoye
4. Sanjay Krishnaswami
5. Emmanuel Ameh
6. Fiemu Nwariaku
7. Susan Brundage
8. Joseph Kim
9. Chummy Nwogu

Finances

LASUTH and LASUCOM provided \$10,000 for air transportation of 5 of our US based faculty.

Other sources of income for this course were

- \$5000 from the AAS Foundation
- \$2500 from Larry Marks, a California based donor
- \$2250 from Mr. Johnson Barovbe, a local Nigerian donor
- \$4000 available from the prior courses

Our costs were reduced significantly by the above-mentioned coverage of meals and lodging for the faculty.

Details of the financials are available on the attached budget.

Future Plans

The inaugural AAS West African Course in 2008 was run in conjunction with the West African College of Surgeons (WACS) – during their annual meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone. WACS is the predominant surgical organization in the region. Subsequent courses have been run with loose collaboration with that body. Going forward, we plan for a closer collaboration between the two entities to maximize the impact of the courses and other contributions our organization can make in the region.

Future courses are thus expected to hold during the duration of the Annual Meeting of the WACS, which typically occurs in February or March yearly. The next meeting is scheduled to be in Monrovia, Liberia between February 26th and March 3rd, 2012. We are currently in the planning phase for this.

Project Hope, a humanitarian non-profit organization based in the United States with significant links in Liberia has agreed to bear a significant portion of the costs of the faculty travel for this upcoming course– i.e. air travel from the United States, lodging and meals. In conjunction with the Research and Career Development Course, the faculty will assist in teaching, medical education and surgical outreach at the John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Monrovia – capital city. The fine details of this arrangement are being worked out.

Additionally, the AAS and WACS are in the final stages of formalizing a Memorandum of Understanding that will involve facilitating an individual from each organization attending each other's annual meeting.

Summary

The Annual Fundamentals of Research and Career Development Course in West Africa has been a significant accomplishment for this association, having run successfully for four years – in a part of the world where there are frequent logistic difficulties abound. We believe that because of our record of success and our collaboration with WACS, we are now in a stronger position to attract increased support from government, industry, and charitable organizations in the West African region and beyond. The long-term sustainability of this course is dependent on such in view of the significant costs for execution of the programs.

We are grateful for the support from the Council as well as the AAS members who have volunteered their time over these last few years to participate in teaching. We would also like to thank

our predecessors, Ben Nwomeh and Evan Nadler for a lot of the groundwork and time they invested in the development of the course.

On behalf our Task Force members, we express our thanks to Council for the opportunity to serve

Respectfully Submitted

A. Peter Ekeh & Jonathan Laryea