

CANCER IN AFRICA: BRIDGING SCIENCE AND HUMANITY

The 9th International Conference of the African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer



The African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC) will be holding its 9th International Cancer Conference entitled "Cancer in Africa: Bridging Science and Humanity" at the Durban International

Convention Centre from 21-24 November 2013. The AORTIC is a pan-African, bilingual, multi-disciplinary and non-governmental organisation that was formed in 1983 and dedicated to the promotion of cancer care and control in Africa. A conference is held biennially and after an exciting meeting in Cairo, Egypt in November 2011, we are proud to welcome the conference to the warm and sunny shores of Durban, South Africa. This year's theme "Cancer in Africa: Bridging Science and Humanity" invokes the essence and spirit of Ubuntu making us realize that science is no longer an isolated discipline, situated in the domain of academics. Science has entered the mainstream consciousness and as responsible individuals we must ensure that intellectual rigour is balanced by open mindedness, a breadth of culture and outlook. This is bound to ensure a world in which all individuals embrace one another's equality and are encouraged and inspired to use their inherent abilities to the fullest, and find their passion for, participate and contribute fully in, and benefit fairly from the prosperity that good health can bring.

Cancer is a significant contributor to non-communicable disease morbidity and mortality in Africa: in 2008, for example, 700 000 people in Africa were newly diagnosed with cancer, and half a million were estimated to have died of cancer that year. Cancers of particular significance in Africa include breast, cervical, prostate, liver and colorectal neoplasms. In South Africa, cancer is the 6th leading cause of mortality and an ever increasing public health problem. AORTIC is dedicated to understanding the complexities of cancer care, and promoting cancer control, in Africa. Thus, this conference will provide a platform for the dissemination of cutting edge advocacy and cancer

management techniques as well as information on basic science and clinical research related to cancers in Africa.

The conference aims to cover a range of topics of broad scope and depth including: National Cancer Control Plans (NCCPs), Cancer Registration, Basic Sciences, Genetics, Epigenetics, Site-specific Cancers, Biomarkers, Radiation, Chemotherapy, Epidemiology, HIV-AIDS-related Cancers, Haematology, Cancer Advocacy, Tobacco-related Cancers, Paediatric Oncology, Palliative Care, and Oncology Nursing. Preconference workshops have been planned to address (1) Psychosocial dynamics of cancer; (2) Burkitt lymphoma; (3) Oesophageal cancer; (4) Cancer advocacy; (5) Cervical cancer prevention; (6) Cancer and sexual health; (7) Prostate Cancer; (8) The African perspective on cancer control and NCDs; and (9) Cancer survivorship. Several parallel sessions during the conference will ensure that each delegate has a choice to attend sessions that relate particularly to their field of research or area of expertise. The conference is also likely to focus on the four modifiable risk factors for cancer i.e. tobacco smoking, harmful use of alcohol, physical inactivity and unhealthy diet and the development of global and regional frameworks that will guide a multisectoral response for cancer control and advocacy ensuring that people are mobilised as agents of change since minimising the burden of cancer is certainly a health, development and human rights issue.

It is as a result of this diversity in the wealth of knowledge that this biennial conference has become a preeminent event on the African healthcare calendar, providing an interactive forum for local and international high level scientists, clinicians, nurses and other health care professionals dedicated to cancer care. The conference plays a powerful role in determining a relevant and cutting edge research and educational agenda for the continent, while the breadth of the scientific programme and rigorous peer review of conference

submissions by a highly competent Scientific Programme Committee has ensured that the meeting is a unique platform for understanding cancer in the African context and that cancer takes its rightful place on the regional healthcare agenda. The conference has attracted approximately 1000 delegates from over 38 countries, including 24 African countries with 68 oral and 193 posters presentations.

2013 marks a significant year in South African cancer control since the Honourable Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, announced his Ministerial Advisory Committee on Cancer Prevention and Control as well as the rollout of the HPV vaccine against cervical cancer, which will begin in 2014. It is the first time since these bold steps were announced that a gathering of this nature attended by international experts and stakeholders will take place in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This conference will provide a base for scholarly growth which will assist in unravelling the intricacies of this disease.

Finally, I wish to thank the Mayor of Durban, Councillor James Nxumalo and the Durban KwaZulu-Natal Convention Bureau for their excellent support and in mobilising key stakeholders in the City of Durban to ensure that the Conference is a resounding success. Apart from the academic activities, a well-planned social programme has been put together to enable

delegates to enjoy the City and surroundings. Finally the AORTIC is also appreciative for all the sponsorships that were received for this conference to be made possible.

I hope that you will have a meaningful, exciting and memorable experience and leave Durban being even more committed to tackling the cancer epidemic with a renewed vigour and thus a renewed hope for humanity.

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