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## First word

### Asthma in Africa: what are the issues?

Non-communicable diseases (NCD) are now taking centre stage and the World Health Organization has named chronic obstructive airways disease as an NCD needing special attention in order to reduce morbidity and mortality. Chronic obstructive airways disease consists of mainly chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which is by and large a fixed (irreversible) airways disease, and asthma, which is largely reversible.

In this issue of *AJRM* we have several articles on asthma addressing pertinent questions. The International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood (ISAAC) studies show asthma prevalence to be high in some parts of Africa, as in the rest of world.

Asthma is both under diagnosed and misdiagnosed and Africa is at a cross-roads where the disease of affluent 'lifestyle' coexists with diseases of poverty, such as under nutrition and infectious diseases. Consequently, asthma has not received its fair attention at policy-making and implementation levels. We hope in future to publish more success stories from Africa; we should not only be self-critical but also celebrate the positive developments.

This is an exciting period for the Pan African Thoracic Society as the association with the South African Thoracic Society moves up a notch. The second Kenya International Scientific Lung Health Conference and PATS MECOR course takes place in October in Nairobi. We are proud to note that there will be a strong presence of PATS MECOR at the conference as they are providing key plenary speakers.

*Dr Evans Amukoye*

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