

The Pan African Thoracic Society Methods in Epidemiological, Clinical and Operational Research (PATS MECOR)



When Dr Ukwaja Kingsley Nnanna first attended the Pan African Thoracic Society Methods in Epidemiological, Clinical and Operational Research (PATS MECOR) programme in 2009 he stated that his ambition was to become 'a leader in infectious disease control'. After attending levels 1, 2, and 3 of the PATS MECOR programme from 2009 to 2011 Kingsley has made considerable strides towards achieving his goal.

The PATS MECOR programme began in 2007 based on an existing MECOR model (formulated by the American Thoracic Society) that has run successfully in Latin America since 1994. One of the main aims of PATS MECOR is to increase the 'numbers of public health, academic, and clinical leaders to support and facilitate research and its application to public health and healthcare related to respiratory disease', in Africa. PATS MECOR courses are held annually in Africa (most recently in Kenya) and attract respiratory physicians and researchers from many different countries across the continent. Trainees at each of the three levels commit themselves to an intensive week of training supported by an experienced international faculty.

- At Level 1 trainees earn the fundamentals of posing a testable research question, the various study design options for generating and testing hypotheses, and basic bio-statistical skills.



Dr Kingsley Ukwaja Nnanna is currently employed as a Registrar (Internal Medicine) at Ebonyi State University Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria and is studying for a postgraduate qualification at the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria, Lagos. He is also a voluntary Research Associate/Facilitator for the Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control Program in Nigeria.

- At Level 2 they develop these skills further and in addition explore data collection and management, learn how to assess research questions for feasibility, and begin to explore funding options.
- The Level 3 course concentrates on paper and grant writing with trainees given 1-to-1 support to enable them to consolidate the skills they have obtained at previous courses and to put them in action.

Kingsley has been an active and committed participant in the PATS MECOR programme. For example, in 2010 he applied for and obtained a Small Grant PATS MECOR award that facilitated a research project 'The economic burden of Tuberculosis care for patients and their households in Nigeria'. In his own words these are some of the outcomes of his PATS MECOR training and the subsequent experience of conducting this research project:

'I gained a valuable experience on the art of writing-up a research grant proposal. I learnt the art of initiating collaboration with an existing institution (The National TB Program in the Ebonyi). The mutual trust developed gave me access to TB treating health facilities and their data. I led a team of investigators guided by the MECOR faculty to initiate and complete the project. This grant award and my collaboration with the National TB Control Program in Ebonyi, has resulted currently in *four conference presentations* at two International Conferences, *three research publications* in International Journals (one manuscript published and two in press), and *two manuscripts*, one under review and one in-preparation. I am now a course facilitator for the TB Program in the state, educating health workers on the International Standards of TB Care and the Patients Charter on TB care. The whole experience has further solidified my academic and research career.'

It is now hoped that Kingsley and other graduates of PATS MECOR will have the opportunity to further hone their research skills within Africa and will also be able to pass on their skills through joining the faculty of future PATS MECOR courses.

- If you would like to participate whether as a trainee, faculty member or supporter of the PATS MECOR programme, please contact Jane Ardrey via e-mail jardrey@liv.av.uk.

PATS: formation of the second Executive Committee

Following a nomination process open to all members of PATS, the following individuals have been invited by the President Professor Heather Zar to join the second Executive Committee with effect from the 1st of March 2012:

- Dr Jules Bashi
- Dr Bertrand Hugo Mbatchou
- Dr Joseph Aluoch
- Professor Refiloe Masekela
- Dr Kingsley Sunday Osagie

The Immediate Past-President (ex-officio) Professor Ali Ben Kheder will also be a member of this committee along with co-opted (non-voting) members Professor Stephen Gordon, Mr Bryan Pearson, Dr Evans Amukoye, and Professor Gregory Erhabor. As defined in the constitution, the selection of officers for will be determined by consensus of the Executive Committee members and plans are in place to hold the first meeting as soon as possible.

Professor Heather Zar sent the following message to the new committee:

‘As the second executive committee of PATS, I believe

we have a great opportunity and challenge to develop PATS and to promote lung health in Africa. In the short time that PATS has existed there has been good progress in developing the society and with key activities such as the *African Journal of Respiratory Medicine* and PATS MECOR.



However, there is much work to be done. During my term as President I propose to strengthen the advocacy role of PATS, to grow the membership and activities, and to forge stronger relationships with African and international professional societies. I look forward to your ideas and to working together to take the society forward as a strong voice for African lung health.’

Further details of the Pan African Thoracic Society and how you could become involved are available on the website www.africanthoracic.org

PATS: forthcoming workshops

The Pan African Thoracic Society (PATS) exists to promote respiratory health in Africa. Previously supported by the Nuffield Foundation (UK) and currently by a private donor and the American Thoracic Society, PATS has set a goal of establishing regular research training workshops in Africa for health professionals, primarily doctors, interested in respiratory research. These workshops are modelled on a successful and expanding programme established 15 years ago in Latin America (MECOR) and now rolled out to Africa, India, and Turkey. The first PATS-MECOR Level 1 workshop was held in 2007.

In 2012 there will be three workshops run concurrently in the week 10th to the 14th of September at the Brackenhurst International Conference Centre, Kenya:

- Level 1: Measuring the burden of disease
- Level 2: Advanced clinical research methods
- Level 3: Further research skills, grant and paper writing

Who should apply?

Doctors or other specialist clinicians with an interest in respiratory medicine, and who wish to improve their skills in clinical research and investigation. No prior experience with research is needed for Level 1.

Applicants for Level 2 should have research experience or have attended PATS-MECOR Level 1. Applicants for Level 3 must have attended Level 2. We will emphasise methods for quantifying the burden of respiratory disease in Africa, so preference in selecting applicants will be given to individuals with a specific interest in this area of research.

What will MECOR graduates gain?

PATS MECOR hopes to provide annual training workshops, ongoing mentorship and a forum in which graduates will be able to present their research findings. We anticipate that PATS-MECOR graduates will form the research backbone of PATS.

Why is research training useful to respiratory doctors?

Research training helps in all aspects of a career in clinical medicine, academic medicine, and research. Research data provide the impetus and momentum for change in healthcare methods, priority setting, local and national budget allocation, and training.

How does the application process work?

Details of the application process can be found on the PATS website www.africanthoracic.org