



Co-Editors

Dr Evans Amukoye,
KEMRI, Centre for Respiratory Disease
Research, Nairobi
Email: amukoye@gmail.com

and

Prof. Gregory Erhabor,
Consultant Chest Physician, OAU
Teaching Hospital, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
Email: gregerhabor7@yahoo.com

Consulting Editor

Dr Stephen Gordon
Senior Clinical Lecturer and Consultant in
Tropical Respiratory Medicine, Liverpool
School of Tropical Medicine, UK
Email: sbgordon@liverpool.ac.uk

Publisher

Bryan Pearson

Managing Editor

Penny Lang
Email: penny@fsg.co.uk

ISSN 1747-5597

All contents are © 2011
FSG Communications Ltd

Correspondence to:

African Journal of Respiratory Medicine
FSG Communications Ltd, Vine House
Fair Green, Reach
Cambridge CB25 0JD, UK.
www.fsg.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0)1638 743633
Fax: +44 (0)1638 743998
E-mail: editor@fsg.co.uk



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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The Pan African Thoracic Society exists to promote respiratory health in Africa. It is supported by the Nuffield Foundation (UK) and the American Thoracic Society. www.africanthoracic.org

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