
EDITORIAL

Urologic cancer in Africa—Papers from the African Organization for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC) meeting

The CJU has a strong commitment to bring global and international healthcare awareness to our readers. As attention is focused on emerging healthcare issues in developing nations, many of the challenges involve urological diseases. We are very pleased to publish, in a special section in this issue of CJU, selected papers from the AORTIC meeting held in October 2007, in Cape Town, South Africa. This conference, whose history is provided in the guest editorial by Dr. Christopher Williams, brought together prominent cancer researchers from all over the world to discuss problems and challenges unique to the developing nations of Africa. Among the attendees were prominent representatives from the National Cancer Institute (NCI, USA), the American Cancer Society (ACS), the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), the International Union Against Cancer (UICC, France), and the World Health Organization (WHO, Switzerland).

The purpose of this growing organization is to foster scientific interchange, networking, and research to face the challenges and opportunities of treating cancer in Africa. This issue of CJU highlights presentations from the Genitourinary Sessions of AORTIC chaired by Professors Serigne Gueye of Senegal, Chris Heyns of South Africa, and Timothy Rebbeck of the United States.

Several of the presentations dealt with disease epidemiology and genetic variations among differing populations, and unique issues of treatment in a setting challenged by socioeconomic and cultural considerations. The paper by Ruenes et al describes the importance of bringing modern techniques of radical prostatectomy to an African setting. Olapade-Olaopa et al discusses the management of advanced prostate cancer and Ndom challenges our compassion with his description of inherent difficulties in offering state-of-the-art cancer treatment in an environment devoid of many of the resources that are taken for granted in North America and in most developed nations.

The take home message is that genitourinary malignancies are very prevalent among African patients, and in particular, prostate cancer represents a very common disease of emerging significance. Most cancers are diagnosed late and in advanced stages, as efforts for prevention and early diagnosis are in their infancy. Effective treatment modalities are often difficult to come by for most patients, due to issues of access to care, and a basic lack of resources—economic limitations on travel, affordability of treatments, and lack of infrastructure by governments and public health organizations. Information, statistics on specific cancer-related issues are also difficult to gather due to the lack of adequate cancer registries in most African nations.

Despite this rather gloomy assessment of the state of cancer care in Africa, the conference was invigorating due to the enthusiasm and drive of the attendees to achieve change and progress, and a determination to improve the care of the cancer patient. New initiatives for the prevention, detection, treatment, and research on all facets of malignant disease were discussed in a combination of formal didactic sessions and small, intimate, interactive workshops. The delegates left filled with optimism and high expectations for the future of cancer care in Africa.

We sincerely hope that our readers will find this special collection of articles both educational and enjoyable.

Gabriel P. Haas, MD, FACS
Syracuse, New York, USA
Editor-in-Chief