

# ADVOCACY WORKSHOP FOR PALLIATIVE CARE IN AFRICA: A FOCUS ON ESSENTIAL PAIN MEDICATION ACCESSIBILITY IN WESTERN AFRICA



## WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT

The African Palliative Care Association (APCA) held a regional advocacy workshop for palliative care with a special focus on essential pain medication accessibility for Western Africa. The workshop took place on May 9-11, 2007 at EarlBeam Hotel, Accra Ghana.

The workshop was funded by the American International Health Alliance (AIHA) Twinning Centre and co-sponsored by the Open Society Institute (OSI) (<http://www.soros.org>); National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO)/ Foundation for Hospices in sub-Saharan Africa (FHSSA) (<http://www.nhpco.org>); the World Health Organization (WHO); and the Pain and Policy Studies Group – University of Wisconsin (<http://www.medsch.wisc.edu/painpolicy>).

The goal of the workshop was threefold:

- i. to improve the knowledge of participants about the policies, tools, and infrastructure necessary to make opioid analgesics available;
- ii. to support participants work with national governments to develop and strengthen palliative care in their own countries; and
- iii. to support participants in evaluating their country-specific drug policies and laws on opioid availability as well as supporting them, develop strategies to facilitate availability and accessibility of opioids.

Six countries – Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, the Gambia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone – were targeted for this workshop and each had a delegation of 4 highly influential participants selected according to agreed criteria. Cote d'Ivoire being a Francophone



Some of the workshop participants in a group photo

country was exceptional and only two delegates attended the workshop. The other countries at the workshop were Uganda, USA, Switzerland, Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa, making it a total of thirteen countries with 68 participants.

The official opening was made by Dr. Kofi Ahmed, Chief Medical Officer, Ministry of Health Ghana. In his speech he acknowledged the importance of palliative care in the

control of pain and ensuring that the patients live comfortable quality lives even when they are facing life threatening illnesses such as cancer and/or HIV/AIDS. He also emphasized the importance of palliative care in children and hoped that APCA would be instrumental in helping West Africa Integrate palliative care into mainstream medical and nursing training.

The six targeted countries, respectively, made presentations about their country situations all of which were focused on giving a picture of what opioid analgesics are available; barriers to availability of opioids; and an assessment checklist of the government policy on the availability of opioid analgesics. These presentations were preceded by presentations from APCA, WHO and the Pain and Policy Studies Group, among others, all of which were giving an overview on why the need for availability and accessibility of essential pain medicines. This helped set the stage for the smooth running of the entire workshop.

The country teams, with the support and guidance from present experts, developed and then drafted very good strategies and implementation plans, a major outcome for the workshop. All country teams expressed a need for on-going advocacy and a need for more training in palliative care. They called upon present partners to continue supporting them in their countries to ensure that opioids are made available and accessible.

The workshop was officially closed by Kathleen Defilippi, chair of APCA board and Dr. Anne Merriman, of Hospice Africa Uganda. They both appreciated the key partners and sponsors of the workshop. They noted that it was a wonderful experience being in Ghana and meeting all the good people who attended the meeting. They finally thanked everyone for coming and sharing their experiences  
Kath Defilippi specifically encouraged country teams to ensure that strategic plans for drug availability and accessibility are implemented.

Dr. Julia Downing, deputy executive director of APCA expressed APCA's excitement about the whole experience and assured participant that whenever possible APCA would be happy to provide technical assistance to them.

For more information about the workshop visit [www.apca.co.ug](http://www.apca.co.ug) or send email to [henry.ddungu@apca.co.ug](mailto:henry.ddungu@apca.co.ug) or [info@apca.co.ug](mailto:info@apca.co.ug)