

EDITORIAL

Special Journal Issue on Neglected Diseases

Neglected Diseases have become topical in international health and there are various initiatives addressing aspects of the subject. What constitutes a neglected disease, however, differs according to the perspective of the individual or organization. More often than not malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS have received attention and massive international support under the banner of neglected diseases. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is an example of such activity. However, there are other diseases whose burden on human life and development, particularly in low income countries, are equally important but receive little support and attention. International organizations like the UNICEF-UNDP-World Bank-WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, Médecin sans Frontières (MSF) and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative have been in the fore articulating the need to find solutions to the increased mortality and morbidity caused by such diseases despite adequate understanding of their pathophysiology.

Globally, the brunt of these conditions is borne by poor countries. The factors responsible for the poor state of response to these diseases include failure of efficient use of existing tools, inadequate or non-existent tools and insufficient knowledge of the health problem. It can also be said the interest shown in these diseases in the early part of the last century was related to the needs of the colonial era. There is also falling numbers of new, safe, effective and affordable medicines for these health conditions as a result of poor financial returns for pharmaceutical companies.

During the first meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Forum for African Medical Editors (FAME) held in September 2004 in Nairobi, the decision was taken to devote one issue of the participating journals to a theme of importance to Africa. To this end the September issue of all the journals will be on the theme "**Neglected Diseases in Africa**".

The health problems to receive attention in the special issue of the journal cover both communicable and non-communicable diseases. These include:

- Leishmaniasis
- Sleeping sickness
- Filariasis
- Onchocerciasis
- Schistosomiasis
- Hydatid cyst
- Noma
- Buruli Ulcer
- Dengue and other haemorrhagic fevers (Lassa, Ebola)
- Yellow fever
- Cancer
- Obesity related health disorders

Clinicians, scientist and other health related personnel are invited to contribute articles on any of the above topics for consideration for the September 2005 issue of the journal.

Professor David Ofori-Adjei
Editor-in-Chief
Ghana Medical Journal
P.O. Box 1596, Accra, Ghana.