

## ASSOCIATION NEWS

### 49<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE GHANA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HELD IN TAKORADI ON 5<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2007

#### ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT, DR. FRANCIS ADU-ABABIO

I am privileged but humbled to address this august gathering. I realise that as the Ghana Medical Association (GMA) President, I follow a line of extremely eminent Presidents of our noble Association to speak on a platform to a captive audience including H.E. the President of the Republic of Ghana, Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor. Today, history is being written. Let it be placed on record that this is the first time H.E. President J.A. Kufuor has attended an event of this magnitude organized by the GMA.

Your Excellency, I respectfully welcome you to the 49<sup>th</sup> AGC of the GMA as the Special Guest of Honour. I also wish to extend a warm welcome to the Minister of Health, Major Courage Quashigah (ret), Ministers of State, Members of Parliament, Nana Kobina Nketsiah VI, Omanhene of Essikado Traditional Area and Members of the Diplomatic Corps as well as the Representatives of the Health Sector Development Partners who are here.

On behalf of the National Executive Council (NEC) and the entire GMA membership, I extend a hearty welcome to all Fellows of the GMA, the several distinguished personalities who accepted the invitation to be amongst us on this occasion. I say AKWAABA to you all.

Permit me to turn to something less somber but nevertheless praiseworthy. This conference is being held by the Western Division in Takoradi which incidentally will serve as one of the venues for the 26<sup>th</sup> Edition of the African Cup of Nations football tournament to be hosted by Ghana in 2008. The euphoria preceding CAN 2008 in the twin city of Sekondi-Takoradi did not prevent our colleagues in this region from accepting to host us. I therefore wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Chairman and members of the Planning committee for working tirelessly to add this conference to the highly successful one you organized in 2007 - 7 years ago. Well done for serving the GMA.

Special Guest of Honour, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme for the 49<sup>th</sup> AGC is "Medical Ethics and Safety of Medical Practice in Ghana:

Emerging Challenges". Firstly, let me dwell on medical ethics. These are moral values, standards and principles determined by peers in the medical/dental profession which govern our practice throughout life. To the astute layperson, the Hippocratic Oath/Physician's Pledge summarizes the 'dos and don'ts' of our profession hence any action either overtly or covertly committed by a practitioner is considered unethical in a professional respect. The service we provide is under severe public scrutiny and criticism.

Recently, health professionals in Ghana have been bombarded by claims that the quality of care offered in our health facilities is so inexcusably low to the extent that some of clients are beginning to have second thoughts about the practice of Orthodox Medicine in Ghana. Simply put, our public image is not worthy of praise. Indeed as the GMA President, on a daily basis, I am confronted with the problem of how to restore the sinking image of our noble profession which was associated with dignity and respect. The awkward questions so often asked are – what type of training do we give to trainees in health institutions? What is the calibre of new entrants into these training Schools, Colleges and Universities?

Your Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, these two questions I have posed are among the several that threaten safe medical practice in our dear country. As one philosopher said, "the problems and their solutions lie with us and not in our stars". It is in recognition of the enormous emerging challenges facing the health sector that the association continues to lead initiatives that will result in positive health indicators. We shall pursue laudable programmes in partnership with all stakeholders both in the public and private sectors because the association is fully convinced that the wealth of the nation is largely dependent on the health of the people.

I urge all health training institutions in Ghana to strengthen the teaching of medical ethics. In the medical/dental schools, the ethos of the profession must be an examinable subject. Above all, senior colleagues of the profession should impart ethical practices to the young ones.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, permit me to express my concerns and indeed that of the association on 3 key areas that are more likely to negate the gains we have made in our developmental agenda.

#### **National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)**

Let me once again say that the NHIS is a commendable way of making health care available to the broad masses of our people. Admittedly, the NHIS removes financial barrier. Nobody should be allowed to give political flavour to the scheme. However, the system is fraught with too many implementation challenges. Not only do we have an unfriendly registration process but also chronic delays in receiving identification cards. There are also reports of the scheme owing billions of old Ghana cedis meant for health facilities who have submitted their genuine claims. I sincerely hold the view that the mechanism of payment to service providers must be streamlined to remove unnecessary bottlenecks. Ultimately, it is the poor client who bears the brunt of somebody's administrative inefficiency. Let me reiterate that the NHIS should purge itself of all fraudsters who are determined to sponge the scheme through their nefarious activities. To this end, I plead with the NHIC not to shield any perpetrators.

#### **Medical & Dental Council (MDC): 2-Year Housemanship**

In my address to you a year ago, I suggested to the MDC that it has become imperative to hold a stakeholders meeting to critically evaluate the 2-year housemanship programme instituted 3 years ago. I wish to place on record that within the year under review, the MDC has organised 2 highly successful round table discussions to resolve the challenges militating against the smooth running of the 2 year-housemanship training. It is my fervent hope that the recommendations arising from the meeting shall be forwarded to the Ministry of Health without delay. It is my conviction that the implementation of the new policy on housemanship training shall commence in 2008. In the years ahead, it is also my expectation that the GMA will deepen their cooperation and resolve to work closely with the MDC to raise the level of health care in Ghana.

#### **Ghana College of Physicians & Surgeons (GCPS)**

His Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the GMA can pride itself that it played a pivotal role in the establishment of the GCPS. We are indeed glad that the College is thriving very well and is about to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday later this month. We wish the GCPS more healthy celebrations. We also applaud all who stood steadfastly behind the association in our quest to make this College a reality.

World-wide, postgraduate studies have become a reliable means of building human capital to address local problems. One area where I see inequity in health is the skewed distribution of Specialists in this country. It is most unfair to see our highly skilled health professionals particularly doctors concentrated in the 2 major cities of Accra and Kumasi.

This is unacceptable. The training of Specialists under the GCPS should be designed to make the regional and district hospitals fully benefit from the expertise of products from the College. I suggest a 1- year mandatory regional/district posting for trainees who have passed the Part II membership examinations. This measure, if well planned and executed, is more likely to decongest the Teaching Hospitals. On entry requirements to the College, the method of recruiting trainees through the award of a point system deserve commendation and must be supported by interest parties.

#### **New Medical/Dental Schools**

As a developing nation, the need for more doctors is obvious. However, the thirst for more doctors/dentists should not override quality products which are derived from institutions with well resourced facilities. With this in view, I am therefore astonished that despite the persistent calls on government to improve infrastructural facilities at the Tamale Hospital to merit the training of doctors, nothing seems to be happening.

Let me use this platform to appeal to H.E. the President to commit the remaining 14 months of his tenure to turn around the fortunes of the Tamale Hospital.

It is also gratifying to see the University of Cape Coast and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology, Kumasi starting medical and dental programmes respectively. I say well done. Again church-led medical schools are beginning to emerge in Ghana. These are positive initiatives. Together, let us have a developmental agenda on health manpower with agreed bench marks within which to operate. Mushrooming of medical schools in Ghana without proper control is a recipe for mediocrity in this great profession. Let us bail the water now that it is ankle deep.

#### **ANNUAL REPORT**

Special Guest of Honour, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, permit me to present highlights of the Association's activities during my 2-year tenure of office.

#### **Health Sector Salary Structure (HSSS)**

The GMA continued to discuss with their employers-MOH/GHS the salaries of public sector practitioners.

With the abolition of ADHA in 2006, a new HSSS is in place for public sector health professionals. It is an understatement to mention that there are implementation difficulties with the new pay structure. In addition, the Terms of Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) governing salary negotiations held over a year ago with the employer has not been signed. Controversies surrounding workers salaries particularly in the health sector often degenerate into industrial action.

It is regrettable that workers agitations over salaries often receive knee-jerk responses from government. This practice must be aborted. To quote what one senior colleague said 'employers should always try not to create situations which may cause the strike idea to enter the minds of doctors'. End of quote. Excellency, it is hoped that the inauguration of the much-awaited Fair Wages Commission/Pay Administration Institution could be expedited to avoid industrial turbulence that have characterized the health sector in the recent past.

#### **Refurbished Old GMA House (Annex)**

The old GMA house has been refurbished into offices and has now become the Annex of the GMA House. The cost of the entire project was borne by the association. Currently, the following groups and societies who applied for office space had their requests approved by the NEC.

- The GMA Pension Fund
- Society of Private Medical & Dental Practitioners
- Ghana Dental Association
- Quasi-Government Health Institutions (State Insurance Company, Trust Hospital, Cocoa Clinic etc)

#### **GMA Annual Public Lecture**

The 8<sup>th</sup> GMA Annual Public was held at the Osu Ebenezer Presbyterian Church Hall in August 2007. The theme was '**Home Environment and Health**'.

#### **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

The association organized 2 CPD in each of the Northern and Southern Sectors of the country. The first symposium, held on June 08, 07 was on the theme, '**Upholding the practitioner – protecting the public – the law in Medical and Dental Practice (NRCD 91)**'. We thank the MDC for providing financial support. On September 07, 2007, the Ghana Aids Commission collaborated with the GMA to host the second continuing medical education programme on the theme, "**Overview of HIV/AIDS situation in Ghana**".

#### **GMA 'Frafraha' land/Sandplex Court Case**

An Accra Fast Track Court is yet to rule on the land dispute between the GMA and Mr. Darfour/Sandplex Company Ltd.

#### **GMA @ 50 – 2008**

On 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2008, the GMA will be 50 years. Launching of the GMA @ 50 took place on July 26, 07 in Kumasi. A yearlong activity has been planned for the celebrations and I extend an invitation to the membership and the general public to participate in the numerous events lined up at the regional level.

As we look back on the past 49 years of our existence, we can count on the achievements of the GMA. Admittedly, there have been setbacks and times of unfortunate discord and controversy. As we prepare to celebrate GMA @ 50, let me humbly through this august gathering render a sincere apology to the families of those who lost their dear ones during the periods when the GMA declared and employed industrial action to seek redress of their grievances. Indeed, I say we are very sorry. Please forgive us.

#### **The Future GMA**

My dear GMA members, the vision of the founding fathers of this great association must never be lost on us. Let us stay together, rededicate ourselves to our shared professional aspirations and build a strong and viable GMA. The challenges may be enormous but if we remain united, we shall always triumph.

#### **CONCLUSION**

For the 2-years when I served as the GMA President, I received unalloyed support from the NEC, the Staff of the National Secretariat and a whole lot of people I cannot mention here who touched my life. I must have offended a few to deserve their condemnation. That, I believe is normal in any human endeavour especially occupying such a high office as I did. It has been very challenging but also highly fulfilling. I wish my successor a fruitful term in office.

Finally, I am grateful to my wife and family for their loyalty. Above all, I thank the Almighty God for bringing me this far.

Thank you for listening and May the good Lord bless us all.

## HONOURS

At the Annual General Conference of the Association at Takoradi in November 2007, Dr Jennifer Welbeck was awarded the Fellowship of the Ghana Medical Association in recognition of her services to the country and the Association. The is the citation accompanying the award.

### DR. JENNIFER EILEEN WELBECK

Dr Jennifer Eileen Welbeck, born Richardson, paediatrician and medical lecturer, you graduated from the University of Ghana Medical School in 1980. Subsequently you joined the local postgraduate training programme in paediatrics in 1983 and then proceeded to Canada to continue your training at the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto and the University of Saskatchewan obtaining the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians in July 1989. You undertook further training in neonatology before returning home in 1991 to an appointment as Lecturer in the Department of Child Health of the University of Ghana Medical School. You are now an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Child Health. You have contributed to the academic life of the College of Health Sciences of the University of Ghana through sitting on its various Boards and Committees.

In the course of your academic and professional life you have contributed to the training of medical students and postgraduates. You have also contributed to the development of general child health care and neonatology through research and clinical practice. Apart from being a Consultant paediatrician at the KorleBu Teaching Hospital, you have offered specialist services to the Tema General Hospital and the Princess Marie

Louise Hospital in Accra. You were a part-time lecturer at the School of Public Health of the College of Health Sciences from 1999 to 2003.

You have been a member of the Drugs and Therapeutics Committee of the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital and worked closely with the Ghana National Drugs Programme on the selection of medicines for the National Essential Medicines List and the development of National Treatment Guidelines. You are also a member of National Breast Feeding Trainers, National Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) Facilitators and the School Health Education Programme (SHEP).

Your involvement with the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, as a member of the Editorial Board and the Educational Committee, and the Ghana Chapter of the West African College of Physicians as Secretary of the Paediatric Faculty is recognised. You are a Fellow of both Colleges. In your own chosen speciality, you were the Secretary of the Paediatrics Association of Ghana from 1997 to 2001 and became its Vice-President from 2004 to 2006.

You have served the Ghana Medical Association in several ways including being its representative on the Nurses and Midwives Council, Chairperson of the Welfare Committee of the Greater Accra Division, a reviewer for the Ghana Medical Journal and reviewer for the Health Week Book series.

Dr Jennifer Eileen Welbeck, in recognition of your services to the nation and Association, Council this day confers on you its highest honour of Fellow of the Ghana Medical Association. Accept this honour and with it all its rights, privileges and responsibilities.

### New Executives of Ghana Medical Association 2007-2009

Dr. Emmanuel Adom Winful	President
Dr. Francis Adu-Ababio	Immediate Past President
Dr. Kwabena Opoku-Adusei	Vice President
Dr. Sodzi Sodzi-Tettey	General Secretary
Dr. Frank Serebour	Asst. General Secretary
Dr. Mary Amoako-Coleman	Treasurer
Dr. Gilbert Benjamin Buckle	Executive Member
Dr. Mariana Taylor	Executive Member

## OBITUARIES

### TRIBUTES

#### PROFESSOR KOFI AMOAH ODURO

No more trouble, or toil, no more head care or heart ache,

No goodbye spoken or sigh heard,

No more pain, no more weariness,

No woe of any kind

No sickness, no sorrow

-Blessed are the dead

The Battles of life fought,

The storms of life weathered,

The lessons of life learned,

The pilgrimage of life trodden Marahs,

Burning Sands all past

-Blessed are the dead

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.

The sudden death of Professor Kofi Amoah Oduro was a devastating blow to us in the Department of Anaesthesia, University of Ghana Medical School (UGMS) and Korle Bu Teaching Hospital (KBTH) and to the young faculty of Anaesthesia of the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons (GCPS). Even though you told us in October 2007 about your wish to retire from "active service" as an Internal Assessor of the GCPS Examinations, we thought: "we have heard that before" and that you would be paying us regular visits as usual and provide the usual advice that we have come to associate with you visits.

"Papa of Anaesthesia", as some of us called you, we were shocked at your sudden death. The phone call that announced your demise sent chills down our spines. We regarded you as God sent because you were so

hardworking; a good teacher teaching us to pay attention to all details in our anaesthetic work.

Anaesthesia is a difficult specialty but you had a way of getting people interested in the art and science of this discipline. You started the Department of Anaesthesia single-handedly in August 1963 as a Special Grade Medical Officer and established the department as a place of excellence, from where several prominent Ghanaian Anaesthetists the world over, had their foundation in Anaesthesia. You joined the UGMS in 1966 as a Senior Lecturer and rose to become a Full Professor and Head of Department in 1972 and you worked in that capacity until your retirement in 1988. You however worked for UGMS on contract till 1998 when you "stopped" active work.

You shared your rich experiences with the Medical Officers and all who came into contact with you.

Your death is an irreparable loss to us in the Department of Anaesthesia UGMS and the Faculty of Anaesthesia GCPS, We shall forever miss you.

May our Eternal God, the One on whom we lean and do not fall, be with you Prof. Kofi Amoah Oduro,

Our "Papa" rest in Perfect Peace.

To the bereaved family; may the Spirit of God strengthen you and give you peace.

*The Department of Anaesthesia University Of Ghana Medical School and The Faculty of Anaesthesia Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons*

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#### DR. H. B. GOODHALL (1921 – 2006)

A GOOD FRIEND OF GHANA

Dr. Henry B. Goodall, popularly known among his friends as Harry, was born in Dundee, Scotland in 1921 and died at the Ninewell Teaching Hospital, also in Dundee, on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

He was educated at Perth Academy and at the St. Andrews University Medical School in Dundee, where he graduated MB, ChB with commendation. He subse-

quently did an MD in Haematology and his thesis won a University Gold Medal.

He was a member of several professional bodies, including the Royal College of Pathologists, of which he was a fellow, and the Association of Clinical Pathologists of Great Britain, in which he served as Publications Secretary and later as National President. With his more than 80 publications, mostly in haematology, and his vast teaching and professional experience, he could have sought and easily won a professorship in haematology in London, but he chose to remain in his

native Dundee as a Senior Lecturer until his retirement. He wanted to be near his widowed mother whom he cared for and visited every week-end until her death.

Harry had a special interest in the teaching of tropical pathology and had in his office a preserved urine sample containing *Schistosoma* ova. He procured the sample in 1948 when he was doing his National Service in Egypt. Each year he would take a drop of the urine and microscopically demonstrate to his excited students *Schistosoma haematobium* ova.

He also had a soft spot for Ghanaian students who passed through the University and many of them have made significant contributions to Medical Education in Ghana. The list includes the late Professor W. N. Laing – first head of Department of Pathology, University of Ghana Medical School and first of Dean of the School of Medical Sciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Professors T. D. Osafo, S. K. Owusu, S. Annobil, G. A. Ankra-Badu, Hector Addo, E. K. Wiredu and also Dr. Tony Laing.

He was an External Examiner in Pathology to the University of Ghana Medical School for two years and it was during his time that a distinction in pathology was first awarded.

He was also very instrumental in the establishment of the School of Medical Sciences at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi as an advisor to the then Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-term Dean. He loved Ghana and cherished his

visits to Accra and Kumasi, in particular. He enjoyed the music of Mr. Koo Nimo.

The imposing statue of the Governor, Brigadier-General Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg in front of the old Administration Block, Korle Bu Hospital, executed by the renowned Ghanaian Sculptor, the late Saka-Acquaye caught his attention and inspired him to research into the colonial history of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. His endeavours resulted in his biography of Governor Guggisberg, entitled “Beloved Imperialist”, published by the Portland Press Ltd. in 1998.

The book is dedicated to two of his former students, the late Professor W. N. Laing and Professor T. D. Osafo both Achimotans. A hundred copies were donated by his widow to Achimota School (which Guggisberg founded in 1927) on the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the school, held recently.

Harry will surely be missed by his Ghanaian friends and we, his former students, will forever remember his academic and professional competence, benevolence and his sense of humors. He is survived by his caring wife Janet, His children Anita and Donald and two grandchildren.

May his soul rest in perfect peace

**Professor T. D. Osafo and Professor G. A. Ankra-Badu**  
**University of Ghana Medical School, Accra, Ghana**