

REBIRTH OF THE GHANA SOCIETY OF DERMATOLOGY

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Figure 1: Launch of Society, Officials at High Table

Ghana officially the Republic of Ghana, is a sovereign unitary presidential constitutional democracy, located along the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean, in the West African Sub region. Spanning a land mass of 238,535 km², Ghana is bordered by the Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire) in the west, Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east and the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean in the south. Ghana's health system boasts of primary, secondary and tertiary care with most specialists providing tertiary care. One group of specialists, the dermatologists are very few with a doctor patient ratio of about 1:1,000,000. This write up describes the formation of the Ghana Society of Dermatology.

The Dermatology Society of Ghana was formed in the 1970's with membership from the few dermatologists in the country at the time. The society

was vibrant with the late Dr. Sackeyfio being the first president, Dr. A. B. Gyening as vice-president, the late Dr. Danquah as treasurer and Dr. Edmund Delle as secretary. Dr. Addy and others formed the general membership. The society hosted the first Pan African Congress on Dermatology successfully in Accra in 1982. However over the time the society became less and less active and eventually became defunct.

In 2010, the 3rd Pan African Conference on Hair and Skin, organized by the L'Oréal group was held at the La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra, in December. This conference offered dermatologists in Ghana the opportunity to meet and to re-organize and chart a new path for the dermatology society in order to make it relevant to the country.

Preparatory meetings for the proposed new society

started with earnest in 2010, with the conveners being Prof. Margaret Larley of the university of Ghana Medical School and Dr. Michael Osei - Boamah of the 37 Military Hospital as secretary. Meetings were held quarterly to deliberate on the way forward. The highlights of the meetings were as follows:

Membership: It was decided that membership be opened to a wide caliber of persons with interest in dermatology. The fear was that considering the small numbers of dermatologists, if membership was restricted, the society would not grow quickly. This was also because at that time there was no local institution training dermatologists and most people trained abroad. This decision then had to be reflected in the name of the society.

Name of Society: The Ghana Society of Dermatology was proposed in contrast to the Dermatology Society of Ghana which was the name of the defunct society. The name was to reflect open membership to anybody interested in dermatology. The other objective was to allow the society to embrace all other professionals with interest in dermatology and not only dermatologists.

Constitution: A Committee was formed to work on a new constitution. This constitution committee was chaired by Dr. Nana Yaw Manu and they did a yeoman's job and produced a constitution in record time. Comments on the draft



Figure 2: Section of participants (dermatologists) at launch



Figure 3: The President, Prof. Margaret Larley delivering her address



Figure 4: Launch by Rep. of Minister of Health, Prof. Larley and Dr. M Vershoore look on

constitution were provided by email and later discussions occurred during meetings. After two sets of corrections based on consensus, the constitution was adopted as the official constitution of the new society.(1) The group also worked hard to produce a logo for the new society. The society was registered with the Registrar Generals Department, Accounts were opened at the Bank and an interim Executive elected to run the society.

Launch: Two years of hard work culminated in an official launch of the society on 17th February 2012 at the La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra. The Guest of Honor was the Minister of Health represented by the Director of Pharmacy. The Minister of Women and Children Affairs who was represented by the chief director was the Chairperson for the occasion. The Special Guest of Honour was Dr. Michelle Vershoore, Medical Director, Division of Research and Innovation, L'Oreal, France . Fraternity messages were delivered by Prof. Pauline Yoboue, President of the Ivorian Dermatology Society. The launch was enriched by a sketch on the harmful effects of skin bleaching, poster and pharmaceutical exhibitions. The members of the society then were twenty (see appendix 1)

The society after the launch moved into action with quarterly meetings per annum, one of which was designated an Annual General Meeting. In addition to administrative issues, each meeting had a scientific component, mostly case based presentations and drug presentations. More recently the society has taken on the role of providing continuous professional education for general practitioners in diseases of the skin. Other activities include community outreaches and discussions on training of dermatologists and middle level personnel.

The society was represented at the 4th L'Oreal Conference on hair and skin in Kenya in 2012 and also attended the 10th Scientific Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Association of Dermatologists in June 2016 and Ghana was the country with the highest representation. The society is presently a member of the newly formed African Society of Dermatology and Venereology (ASDV). Fostering Collaborations with sister societies is key among the society's objectives.

The society is keen to involve the younger generation to prevent the one from suffering the same fate as its predecessor. Long live Ghana Society of Dermatology.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank senior colleagues who were part of the former society and who provided invaluable advice during the formation of the new one. They are Professors J. H. Addy, Edmund N.Delle and Brigadier General A B Gyening (rtd). Our thanks also go to Professor H. A. Addo and Dr. Samson Badu Ofori, the first vice-president. Further gratitude goes to all founding members and corporate organizations like L'Oreal West Africa, Unilever Ghana; Glaxo Smith Kline Stiefel, Adepa Pharmacy; La Gray Pharmaceuticals and Janssen Pharmaceuticals UNICHEM Pharmaceuticals, MSD, Astra Zeneca, Suprapharma Ltd, Lancet laboratories, Eastern Chemists and Interpharma Ltd for supporting the launch.

REFERENCES

Ghana Society of Dermatology: Constitution, 2011

APPENDIX 1: Names of Founding Members

Prof. Jonathan Addy
 Prof. Edmund N. Delle
 Prof. Hector Addo
 Brig. Gen. A B Gyening (rtd)
 Prof. Margaret Lartey
 Dr. Samson Badu Ofori
 Dr. Michael Osei Boamah
 Dr. Alhaji Konney
 Dr. Nana Adu Akumia
 Dr. Nana Yaw Manu
 Dr. Esther Kitcher
 Dr. Esther Annankra
 Dr. Evelyn Kwabia
 Dr. Jeanette Aryee-Boi
 Dr. Ekow Amankra Otabir
 Dr. Bridget Gogo
 Dr. Charity Owusu-Asare
 Dr. Charles Haligah
 Dr. Martin Agyei Peprah
 Dr. Susu Kwawukume
 Dr. Ali Mahama
 Dr. Francis Afflu
 Dr. Mavis Mensah