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***The IUPHAR Sub-Committee on Clinical Pharmacology in Developing Countries and The Medicines Utilization Research In Africa (MURIA) Group Co-Organized The Third Training Workshop on Drug Utilization Research in Africa.***

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The IUPHAR Sub-Committee on Clinical Pharmacology in developing countries continues to partner with The Medicines Utilization Research In Africa (MURIA) Group to advance Drug Utilization research (DUR) in Africa and promote sustainable rational uses of medicines (RUM) through training, workshops, networking and cross national research.<sup>1-6</sup> The Third Annual MURIA Training Workshop and Symposium took place between 26 and 28 June, 2017 at The University of Windhoek, Namibia, with the theme 'Medicines Utilization Research in Africa influencing patient care and policy.'<sup>7</sup>

The meeting drew over 100 participants from countries across Africa, Europe and North America including Botswana, Brazil, South Africa, Swaziland, Namibia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Italy, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The meeting kicked off with an opening ceremony in the morning of Monday 26 June in the main auditorium of the University of Namibia Health Sciences Campus. The event was graced by the management team of The University of Namibia and other important dignitaries including Ms Jo Lomas, The British High Commissioner to Namibia. The University Management Team in attendance included: Dr. Kalumbi Shangula (Assistant Pro Vice Chancellor – Health Sciences Campus), Prof. Tim Rennie (Associate Dean – School of Pharmacy), Prof. Peter Nyarango (Dean – Faculty of Health Sciences) and Prof. Frednard Gideon (Pro Vice Chancellor – Academic Affairs).





**Participants at The Third Training Workshop and Symposium of MURIA Group held at The University of Namibia, Windhoek between 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2016.**

Prof. Kalumbi Shangula in his welcome address expressed his gladness seeing delegates from several countries coming together in Windhoek to exchange knowledge and work together towards improving the use of medicines in Africa. He was particularly delighted that among other topics, the meeting will address the issues of 'Maternal to Child Transmission of HIV', recounting the challenges faced by the health authorities of Namibia in putting together a programme that is now considered the most successful health programme in the country. Prof Tim Rennie berated the widespread misuse of Antibiotics and the rising prevalence of Anti-Microbial Resistance in the continent as well as in other parts of the world.<sup>8-13</sup> He also commended the organisers of the workshop for the inclusion of a number of undergraduate and postgraduate student presentations. While welcoming delegates to Namibia and The University of Namibia in particular, Prof Peter Nyarango, the Dean of The Faculty of Health Sciences, also lent his voice to the need to urgently address the problem of AMR and make medicines affordable while working towards the emergence of new novel antimicrobials. Thereafter, The Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Namibia, Prof Frednard declared the workshop opened, advocating for more networking among the participants, soliciting academia and industry collaboration in trainings and research,

opportunities for sponsored doctorate degree programmes in AMR, and MURIA and her partners coming up with policy statements and guidelines on various aspects of drug utilization in Africa.

Subsequently, Francis Kaleemera of the local organizing committee and Prof Brian Godman introduced the workshop sessions which was divided into two groups: Introductory and Advanced groups respectively. The Introductory Drug Utilization (DU) workshop anchored by Prof Ilse Truter covered general introduction to DU research with emphasis on methodologies including ATC/DDD systems, qualitative DU research and introduction to statistical techniques applicable to DU research which was anchored by Marike Cockeran. The Advanced workshop group was further divided into two tracks 2A and 2B respectively. Track 2A featured hands on session on statistics and advanced analysis facilitated by Marike Cockeran as well as presentations on 'Developing and Implementing quality indicators for drug utilization studies by Brian Godman. Track 2B featured workshops on the following topics: Available data sources and Pharmacoepidemiology methodologies and applications with emphasis on use of data on import and local production and procurement for drug utilization research anchored by Alessandra Ferrario, Use of Claim databases by Johanita Burger and introduction to patient level databases by Amanj Baker. The Advanced group thereafter came together with Andy Gray leading the workshop on Research project and Proposal writing while Ilse Truter and Margaret Oluka subsequently made presentations on Qualitative research in DU studies with questions and answers session following. The first day of the meeting was rounded off with an outdoor informal dinner for interested participants.

The second day of the meeting, 27 June, 2017 was dedicated to research presentations and updates from various countries on research activities. It was divided into the morning and afternoon sessions. The day kicked off with a welcome remark by The Chief Pharmacist of Namibia following which Roberta Joppi making a presentation on 'Development of Horizon Scanning activities and its implications for Africa. Other presentations at this session are as follows: Managed entry agreements and pricing considerations for medicines across countries, building on the European experience, by Alessandra Ferrario, An innovative web-based Pharmaceutical Information Dashboard by W Churfo showcasing how this has enhanced evidence based decision making in ART pharmaceutical services in Namibia, Feedbacks from Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa on the on-going cross-national Antibiotics Point Prevalence Studies by Sekessai Zinyowera, Natalie Schellack and Bene Paramadhas. Furthermore, Olayinka Ogunleye and Joseph Fadare made a joint presentations on the completed and on-going studies in Nigeria on Antimicrobials and Non Communicable Diseases as well as other activities including promotion of Drugs and Therapeutics Committees. Margaret Oluka also gave feedbacks on action plans from Kenya. Of note in this session was the participation of Maribel Salas, a member of the Board of International Society of Pharmacoepidemiology (ISPE), and her presentation titles 'Update on Good Practices of Drug Utilization Studies in Countries from the Latin America and African Regions, a project being undertaken by ISPE and MURIA towards enhancing good practices and the quality of DUR in these regions. There were other oral presentations on the topic of antimicrobial utilization by participants including the MURIA Positioning Statement titles 'Strategies to improve antibiotic prescribing and dispensing in Africa' proposed by N Schellack and A Guantai, which further stimulated discussions on inappropriate uses of antimicrobials and solutions. The day also featured posters sessions and abridged oral presentations of posters mostly by students, with the day brought to a close with the presentation by Ilse Truter on 'Dispensing patterns of anti-migraine agents with focus on seasonal variations in prescribing in South Africa.'<sup>7</sup>

The third day of the meeting, 28 June, 2017 featured additional oral presentations on Paediatric Antiretroviral Treatments in Namibia by G Mazibuko et al, Insulin prescription errors in a public tertiary hospital in Kenya by A Guantai, Predictors of adherence to oral antihypertensives among patients in Ghana by E Sarkodie and a similar study from primary health care setting in South Africa and Namibia by E Rampamba and MM Nashilongo respectively. J Mwitwa presented a paper on Quality of Anticoagulation with warfarin at a tertiary hospital in Botswana while S Orubu et al presented a paper on 'Access to medicines for children in Nigeria reporting an exploratory study on the quality of oral essential cardiovascular medicines and diuretics.

The meeting featured over 35 oral and over 30 poster presentations, and ended with a consensus session on the way forward for the group on future directions and agreements on potential studies, publication strategies and funding sources. Specific areas of common research interests were identified and working groups constituted for each respectively. The meeting was adjudged by participants to be highly interactive and impactful with improved quality of presentations compared to the previous editions. Participants departed Windhoek in high spirits looking forward to next MURIA Group meeting in 2018 at the same venue.



A Cross Section of Participants at the meeting



A Poster Session







Lunch Time



One of the parallel sessions in the Advanced Group workshops



Some of the participating students



The outdoor dinner in the evening of day 1



The Press Briefing at the close of the meeting on day 3.

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