



African Federation for Emergency Medicine
African Journal of Emergency Medicine

www.africanemergcare.ning.com
 www.sciencedirect.com



Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity

It is Hippocrates that is accredited with saying, “Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity”. It seems fitting then that the theme for the IVth EMSSA International Emergency Medicine Conference from 5 to 7 November 2013 in Cape Town is *Opportunity and Innovation*. The end of this year also affords us the opportunity to reflect on the first decade of Emergency Medicine in South Africa. Emergency medical care in South Africa and the rest of Africa has expanded at a rate that none of us thought was possible. There are training programmes starting in numerous geographical locations and new graduates are being recognised every year. There is a strong focus on the development, implementation and improvement of pre-hospital systems in the continent. Patient safety and quality improvement and the development of core standards are also being addressed. Multiple collaborative partnerships are ensuring a bright future ahead.

Hundreds and probably thousands of years ago, medical education was based on a rich verbal tradition. The arrival of the printed word resulted in textbooks becoming the staple for teaching in the health sciences for hundreds of years. Medical innovations have come and gone (we can all recall reading about bloodletting, trepanation and heroin in cough syrup for children). The past few decades have seen the entrenchment of evidence based medicine in every aspect of health care. We want to know that we are doing the best for our patients.

We are starting to see the rise of a new era in medicine. Technology has developed to such an extent that knowledge is now instantaneous, all encompassing and rapidly expanding. Students and teachers have knowledge at their fingertips and physicians can make immediate clinical decisions via their smart phones and tablets. The virtual world dissolves geographical boundaries and information can be accessed and disseminated in a heartbeat.

Peer review under responsibility of African Federation for Emergency Medicine.



All these developments are greatly advantageous for those of us in emergency medical care. Our short attention spans and lack of enthusiasm for protracted ward rounds and endless outpatient clinics and the fact that we are the new kids on the block in terms of specialities mean that the discipline of emergency medical care has embraced this instant gratification medical media revolution and in many instances is leading the way. The quantity and excellent quality of web-based resources for emergency medicine are phenomenal. We can read, listen and type on virtually any platform.

Emergency medical systems are the barometers of a country's health system. They often are where the most vulnerable, sickest members of society come as the first point of care. Patients are sometimes in emergency centres because they cannot access health care anywhere else, or there has been a lack of primary health care clinics in their area or unfortunately the scourge of violence, alcohol-related injuries, infectious and non-communicable diseases are what bring them to our front door. Those are the lucky ones because there are still many people that do not even have the prospect of being transported by an ambulance and taken to hospital. It is vital that we utilise conferences such as these to build bridges to improve patient care.

Innovation is not all about expensive IT systems and software development. It is about taking the emergency medicine wheel and reinventing it for the very diverse clinical environments in Africa. We hope that this conference will be a platform to further explore the theme of “Opportunity & Innovation”:

- To expand emergency medicine into the continent.
- To improve access to care.
- To develop and implement training programmes.
- An opportunity to strengthen and develop African emergency medical care research in order to establish accurate burden of disease to appropriately align resource allocation and infrastructure.
- To engage with national governments to build partnerships and to raise awareness of emergency care issues.
- To utilise innovative technology.
- To prioritise excellent quality of emergency care for all Africans.

Once again the Adopt-A-Delegate programme has been extremely successful and I would like to extend a warm thank you on behalf of the recipients to those of you that have given so generously. This has enabled delegates from all over Africa the opportunity to be part of this prestigious event. This supplement is a summary of the excellent research being performed in emergency medical care that will be showcased at the EMSSA conference in November. I look forward to welcoming you to this world-class event. May many opportunities cross your path and may innovation light your way.

Melanie Stander

*Emergency Medicine Society of South Africa & Division of
Emergency Medicine, Stellenbosch University,
Cape Town, South Africa
E-mail address: melaniestander@sun.ac.za*

Available online 12 August 2013