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# African Journal of Emergency Medicine

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## EDITORIAL

### The first Tanzanian Conference on Emergency Medicine



On September 2016, Dar es Salaam – the commercial capital of Tanzania – hosted the first, ever Tanzanian conference on Emergency Medicine with the theme: *State of Emergency Medicine in Tanzania: Knowledge, Resources and Long-term Sustainability*. The conference was organized by the Emergency Medicine Association of Tanzania (EMAT) and was supported by the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, Abbott Fund Tanzania, Emergency Medicine Department of Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, and Muhimbili National Hospital. The goal of the conference was to bring together health care providers with active involvement in emergency care within Tanzania, to establish a country- and regional wide network that could interpret the state of emergency medicine practiced locally and hence share and support the initiatives that can foster growth within Tanzania.

The inaugural conference was preceded by two, two-day pre-conference workshops: the Basic and Advanced Life Support and Paediatric Emergency Care Training workshop. The preconference workshops were developed de novo by EMAT to provide hands-on, basic, refresher skills to providers from different institutions with the aim of improving lifesaving skills across the various institutions within Tanzania. The workshops were attended by 161 participants (mainly nurses and doctors with a few participants from other allied health cadres) who represented 42 different institutions (72% from the public sector) from 15 of the 26 regions in Tanzania.

The Basic and Advanced Life Support workshop trained participants in safety, triage, general A to E approach, approach to cardiac arrest, bradycardia and tachycardia, resuscitation in special circumstances (pregnancy, anaphylaxis and paediatrics) and communication and handover of patients. The Paediatric Emergency Care Training focused on safety, triage, A to E approach in paediatrics, approach to special medical conditions in children (shock, convulsions, and difficulty in breathing), approach to trauma in children (head, spinal, chest, abdominal and extremity injuries), team work, communication and handover of patients. The workshops were facilitated by clinical nurse trainers, specialist emergency medicine trainees and other specialists from Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences and Muhimbili National Hospital. Participants engaged in didactic sessions followed by several practical stations. Skills practiced included cardiopulmonary resuscitation, intraosseous

access, synchronized cardioversion, manoeuvres to relieve choking and placement of neck collars. In all these sessions, improvisation was discussed and where applicable, examples were shown. Of particular value was the inclusion of a consensus meeting deliberating on issues that hinder proper delivery of basic emergency care within participants' facilities. The consensus meetings' resolutions highlighted overwhelmingly the need for training on proper use of devices for general A to E management, teamwork, basic and advanced life support.

The conference drew over 250 participants (including the pre-conference workshop attendees), many of whom were Tanzanian nationals. It also drew participants from South Africa, Ethiopia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Egypt, Kenya, Switzerland and India. The conference was inaugurated by the Permanent secretary of the Ministry, who spoke about the importance of Emergency Medicine in Tanzania, the symbolism of the conference for the growth of emergency care in rural areas and the involvement and the commitment of government support for EMAT initiatives supporting emergency care in Tanzania. In keeping up with its theme, the conference included four main keynotes, covering the state of emergency medicine in Tanzania, emergency care systems in Africa, trauma care, and emergency and disaster preparedness in Tanzania. The keynotes were followed by three afternoon breakout sessions: Adult Emergency Medicine, Paediatric and Global Emergency Medicine, and Emergency Care Nursing. Each breakout session consisted of two major themes with subgroups on: adult emergency medicine and critical care, obstetric, trauma and out of hospital care, paediatric and global emergency medicine, global emergency medicine, emergency nursing and emergency nursing in limited resource settings. Overall the breakout sessions were well attended and the participants expressed the need for more days to be added in future.

The closing ceremony was officiated by the Chief Medical Officer of Tanzania who presented the closing remarks and certificates to the pre-conference workshop attendees. In his closing remarks, the Chief Medical Officer reaffirmed the full support of the government towards EMAT missions, citing the importance of emergency medicine locally in saving lives. EMAT hopes to organize future conferences at least annually, and looks forward to using the experience gained in this conference to plan a bid for the 2018 African Conference on Emergency Medicine.

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**Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the views of the African Journal of Emergency Medicine or the African Federation for Emergency Medicine and are solely the opinion of the authors.

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