

ESP WORKING GROUP "PATHOLOGY IN FAVOUR OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES"
REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2016

The ECP 2016 held in Cologne has probably marked one of the most important moments of the activities of our WG: the official signature of an agreement between ESP and two other Associations devoted to the development of our profession in underserved parts of the world.

The first Association is the Italian NGO "Associazione Patologi Oltre Frontiera (APOF, "Pathologists Beyond Borders Association"), born in Italy in 1999 by a group of pathologists that began its activities for the development of health programs dedicated to surgical pathology in poor Countries as a working group of the Italian Society of Pathology (SIAPEC). Today, APOF is an independent institution that works closely with SIAPEC, and that, in 2009, fostered the creation of our Working Group within the ESP in order to enlarge its field of activities to European colleagues.

The involvement of AORTIC (African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer), the second association that has signed this agreement, is to be considered a logical consequence of these activities.

AORTIC is one of the largest and influential health Association in Africa; it is an NGO formed in 1983 by expatriate African cancer care workers, scientists and their friends with the aim to promote cancer control and palliation in Africa. AORTIC Executive members are high profile experts in the cancer field who volunteer as knowledge workers for the plight of cancer patients in Africa. AORTIC strives to unite the African continent in achieving its goal of a cancer-free Africa, and to seek to make a positive impact throughout the region through collaboration with health ministries and global cancer organisations.

The main aim of the agreement, which full text is available on this webpage, is to combine the professionalism and expertise of the three Associations involved in order to develop common projects dedicated to improving surgical pathology (in particular oncologic diagnostic) in underserved Countries. Further discussions with some representatives of the three Associations have led to the decision to focus mainly on training of the local health staff, either on site or with internships in Europe.

In projects like these, ESP can play a fundamental role for the implementation of this agreement.

Regarding the sessions organized by our WG, the joint ECP-IAP congress has allowed the expansion and further definition of the scientific opportunities that can be offered; the involvement of speakers from IAP (by definition, a planetary Association!) has indeed allowed a deeper discussion of the role of our profession in low-income settings.

With regards to the two sessions planned for the congress, the joint with the IAP was entitled "the keywords of management of surgical pathology in low resource settings: cooperation, sustainability, technology" and was centred mainly on training and didactic teaching that can be provided for African countries.

The details of such educational programs were well outlined in the presentations of Isidore Diomande (Ivory Coast) and Yawale Ilyasu (Nigeria), while Adekunle Adesina (Nigeria) outlined the details of a program for diagnostic standardization through the sharing of pathology cases between African and pathologists from Europe and North America.

The other presentations, primarily by Italian speakers, instead addressed specific topics such as how to promote and manage the production of scientific data from a health cooperation project (Vincenzo Stracca Pansa), the possibility of organizing sustainable molecular biology projects even in low-resource setting (Giorgio Stanta) and a presentation on a project devoted to cervical cancer prevention in the North-West of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Sergio Arnaud).

The session, chaired by Ho-Keung Ng (Honk Kong) and by Vincenzo Stracca Pansa (Italy), ended with the ceremony of signing of the agreement.

The second session, entirely organized by our WG was chaired by Gerhard Stauch and Steffen Hauptmann, both from Germany and was particularly dedicated to telepathology. The presentations were dedicated to a description of the practical use of this technique in helping the everyday practice of pathology departments in Eastern Asia, by Golam Mostapha, from Bangladesh, and about an experience in Cambodia by Nora Hinsch (Germany).

The other presentations that completed the session include that of Monika Hubler (Switzerland) about the IPATH project, a large database of cases that allows remote consultations in a network of laboratories widespread in the world, and Peter Dalquen (Switzerland) and Dietmar Kunze (Germany) who deeply examined the benefits and limitations of the web transmission of static images in cytology and histology, respectively.

Finally, there was also an interesting presentation by Matteo Botteghi, an Italian computer scientist, about the possibility of uploading large images from poor Countries without expensive connections through exploiting the existing commercial ones on site, and optimizing its efficiency through a special software.

We have been encouraged by the participation of many speakers also from outside Europe, as in the spirit of our Working Group, and from the strong cooperation of APOF and AORTIC in the organization of all the sessions. For the next year, we are planning further activities with the aim to continue to be a bridge between European and non-European pathology.

In addition to the usual symposium of the WG, that will be mainly dedicated to the results of the signed agreement, we are planning a joint session with the Breast Working Group, to examine the status of diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer in underserved Countries, and to have the second edition of the slide seminar similar to the one held in 2015, and mainly dedicated to participants from outside Europe.

Stefano Guzzetti
Chair of ESP WG
"Pathology in Favour of Developing Countries"