

# **COMMONWEALTH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**



## **TRIENNIAL REPORT (2007-2010)**

**Presented to the CMA Council Meeting**

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### **Brief Introduction**

The Commonwealth Medical Association was established in 1969. The role of the association is to promote, assist, and strengthen the capacities of the member national medical associations of countries within the Commonwealth and provide leadership and services for the benefit of the health and welfare of the people within the Commonwealth.

The CMA is an independent civil society organization which is governed by the Council of the association. The Association is administered by the Executive guided by the decisions of the Council and it is committed to an open and transparent relationship with its stakeholders.

The association experienced a most challenging period from 2001-2004 with a spillover effect during the triennium of 2004-2007. The association lost its headquarters in London during these periods and this made operations much more difficult.

This triennial report summarizes the work of the Executive from November 2007 to November 2010.

### **The Executive**

The Executive for the current triennium was elected at the 21<sup>st</sup> triennial meeting in November 2007 at Chennai, India. However a few months afterwards the treasurer Dr Myra Tilney, resigned and the Executive on the recommendation of the President subsequently appointed Dr Margaret Mungherera, Vice-President of the ECSA region to act. In November 2009 the Executive also invoked the constitutional provisions to appoint Dr Solaiman Juman, immediate past president of the Trinidad & Tobago Medical Association as the Vice-President for the Caribbean and Canada region to fill the vacancy that had remained following the last election.

The Executive at the time of the 22<sup>nd</sup> triennial conference was thus composed as follows;

1. Dr. Sundara Arulraj - President, *India Medical Association*
2. Prof A B Akosa -Immediate Past President  
*Ghana Medical Association*
3. Dr. Oheneba Owusu-Danso -Secretary, *Ghana Medical Association*
4. Dr. Margaret Mungherera, -Acting Treasurer & Vice-President, Eastern,  
Central and Southern, Africa region  
*Uganda Medical Association*
5. Prof. Wole Atoyebi, - Vice-President, West Africa region  
*Nigerian Medical Association,*
6. Dr. Jean Paul Tabone - Vice-President for European region,  
*Medical Association of Malta,*
7. Dr. N. Arumugam -Vice-President for S E Asia/Australia region,  
*Malaysia Medical Association,*
8. Dr. Ajay Kamar, - Vice-President for Central Asia region,  
*India Medical Association,*
10. Dr. Solaiman Juman -Vice President, Canadian/Caribbean  
*Trinidad & Tobago Medical Association*

Elections were due in November 2010 during the triennial conference of the association scheduled for Malta.

## **The Secretariat**

Following the expiration of the period for temporary location of the CMA secretariat in Malta and the subsequent re-negotiation with the British Medical Association for an office space and other secretariat support, the Executive decided to relocate the secretariat back in London. After a rather long process of setting up the office and an interview process, the secretariat was finally re-established in the BMA house in London in November 2007. Ms Rita Afriyie was engaged as the Liaison officer. In July 2009 Ms. Janet Adrah was recruited as the new Liaison Officer to replace Ms. Rita Afriyie who resigned to take up another job.

So far the secretariat has performed effectively in promoting the functions and operations of the CMA, the significant evidence of which is reflected in the major increase in the number of NMAs involved in the 22<sup>nd</sup> triennial conference in Malta.

## **Website**

The re-establishment of a CMA website was long overdue and at the Executive meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in November 2008 Dr J P Tabone, Vice-President for the European region agreed to assist with the process which finally yielded the website currently in operation. The address is [www.commonwealthmedics.org](http://www.commonwealthmedics.org). The website however requires extensive upgrading to bring to the standard befitting the status of CMA. This is a task the new Executive must pursue vigorously.

## **Annual Subscriptions**

The non-payment of subscription by most NMA's continues to be a huge challenge to the stability and ability of the CMA to deliver on its constitutional mandate. All NMAs are encouraged to pay up their annual subscriptions in accordance with the updated list of defaulters. Several reminders have been issued to this effect. While a number of NMAs are still in arrears a considerable number have in the course of the year 2010 paid up all their arrears.

## **Audited Accounts**

The CMA accounts for the last three years namely 2007, 2008 and 2009 have been duly completed and audited. The association has currently filed to-date all the relevant accounts and directors reports with the Companies House in the UK as legally required.

## **CommonHEALTH Newsletter**

The official newsletter for the CMA, *CommonHEALTH*, has been revived. The latest edition of the e-newsletter has just been published. Among other challenges the major obstacle facing the publications is lack of news. The secretariat and the acting editor, Prof Wole Atoyebi, wishes to appeal to NMAs to file news about their NMAs, social events within the profession and health related events and policy reviews/challenges in their countries to improve the rate of publication and circulation of the CommonHEALTH

## **Individual (Associate) Membership**

In March 2009 the CMA Executive gave approval for the establishment of Individual membership in the CMA. This was a follow up on the initial consensus agreed upon at the council

meeting of 2007 in Chennai, India. The terms and conditions of such membership and the application form have since been circulated to all NMAs and posted on the CMA website.

### **The CMA Trust**

It is gratifying to report that the CMA Trust has been finally re-established. Following the loss of the previous Trust (ComMAT) in 2003, the CMA leadership had been exploring ways of establishing a new Trust. At the last Triennial meeting in Chennai, India, a 3-member committee comprising Dr P Krishnan (Chair and Past President), Dr S Arulraj (President) and Dr O Owusu-Danso (Secretary) was charged to pursue this project. The process had been quite challenging. After a number of meetings in London and subsequent negotiations the Trust was finally incorporated in July 2010 through the firm of accountants, R B Alvis, in Liverpool, United Kingdom. It is expected that a bank account will soon be opened for the Trust before the end of the year to start the effort of mobilizing funds towards some important health projects.

### **Workshops and Symposia organized by CMA**

During the period under review the following workshops and symposia were organized by the CMA.

#### ***eHealth Commonwealth Asia Conference***

This was CMA collaboration with the annual E-Asia conference which took place in Kuala Lumpur from November 11-14, 2008. The CMA collaborated in the special session held for new and enhanced electronic products in the delivery of health services. Papers were presented by the CMA Executives who attended. The conference was very exciting as it displayed important technological products in health care services and provided better alternatives in solving some of the major challenges facing health services in the Commonwealth. It is recommended that this project be actively pursued by NMAs by collaborating with the health services authorities in the respective countries especially in the area of collating basic country data and developing strategies for improvement.

#### ***Commonwealth Asia Symposium on Health Workers Migration***

The symposium was organized by the CMA in partnership with and support from the Commonwealth Foundation. It was held

in New Delhi from November 16-19, 2008. Commonwealth health professional associations for medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, mental health and the handicapped and developmental disabilities were represented by member associations from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia and Bangladesh.

#### ***Commonwealth Africa Symposium on Health Workers Migration***

This symposium was a follow up on the one held later the previous year in India. It took place in Gaborone, Botswana in June 2009. All the major health professions across Africa were represented and CMA was represented by Dr Margaret Mungherera, acting Treasurer and Vice-President for the ECSA region, Dr Mary Amoakoh-Coleman and Dr Jenifer Kavuma of the Ghana Medical Association and Uganda Medical Association respectively. The symposium was successful and made far reaching recommendations which were presented to the Commonwealth Foundation which funded the symposium. The report has also been disseminated to all NMAs.

#### ***International Symposium on Climate Change and Health***

The CMA with the support of the Commonwealth Foundation and under the local organization of the Medical Association of Tanzania organised an international workshop on "Climate Change and Health" in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania for selected national medical associations (NMAs) on November 5 and 6, 2009. It was attended by national medical associations from Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania and various health professional associations and stakeholders from Tanzania.

Some of the sub-themes deliberated upon included the following;

- An Overview of Climate Change and Health
- Changing Patterns of Disease and Mortality arising from Climate Change
- Impact of Climate Change on Vulnerable Communities and Groups- women, children, displaced populations etc
  
- Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies on the Impact of Climate Change on health.
- Commonwealth Health Professional Alliance Survey Report on Climate Change
- A summary report of the 2009 Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting
- Managing effects of Climate Change on Food Security, Water and Sanitation
- Reports on Country Experiences

The group session that followed tackled the following areas;

- The role of doctors and other health professionals in managing the effects of climate change
- Strategies for advocacy by national medical associations
  - Processes/Indicators for conducting vulnerability assessment of Climate Change Health Risks P
  - Implementation of Adaptation Strategies and how to deal with the accompanying challenges. I

The group adopted further steps and actions for follow up which urged member associations to begin sensitisation programmes for their members on the topic. It also urged all NMAS to build capacity and take part in their national stakeholders' consultations in managing the effects of climate change in their countries. The secretariat has yet to receive reports on any actions executed NMA's.

### **Commonwealth People's Forum**

In November 2009 the President and the Secretary represented the CMA at the Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) which preceded the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Trinidad and Tobago. The CMA team made significant impact with the presentations at the forum leading to the adoption of some of the proposals in the final resolution. The secretary took part in the forum on climate change and presented views from the CMA workshop held in Tanzania.

He later joined the President at the forum on health where a presentation was made on e-Health. The presentation included analysis and projections from the 2008 eHealth Asia Conference, which the CMA was a major partner. The CMA stressed the urgent need for Commonwealth countries to begin active mainstreaming of electronic technology into health services as an important strategy in improving healthcare.

Other health-related issues deliberated upon at the CPF were Commonwealth support for the formation of a Patent Pool, the establishment of a Currency Transaction Levy (CTL) for Health and law reform and human rights as related to HIV and AIDS stigma and discrimination.

The general assembly reiterated its commitment to the Commonwealth's core values namely; International peace and security, Democracy, Human Rights, Separation of powers, Rule of Law, Freedom of Expression, Developments, Gender Equality, Access to health and education, Good Governance, Civil Society and its core principles of consensus and common action, mutual respect, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness.

## **President and Secretary Visit - Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association**

While in Trinidad and Tobago the President and the Secretary were honoured as special guests at an end of year meeting and dinner organized by the Trinidad & Tobago Medical Association (T&TMA).

Following the interaction and subsequent consultation Dr. Solaiman Juman (Immediate Past President T&TMA) was proposed for the position of Regional Vice President for the Caribbean and Canada region which remained vacant after the last elections in India. The nomination was subsequently approved by the Executive.

## **CHMM and WHA**

The CMA took part in the 2008 and 2010 Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting held in May. In 2008 the CHMM discussed “E-Health: Challenges and Opportunities” while this year’s summit had the theme “Achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015”. In pursuit of the theme the Commonwealth Health Professions Alliance CHPA organized a debate on “Achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015- Possible or Impossible?” It was chaired by the CMA President and the voting which followed the debate was adjudged as a drawn contest. The CHPA and subsequently the CMA secretariat have since circulated the report on the debate to all NMAs.

## **Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Health**

The President represented the CMA in this committee. Following the formation of the Commonwealth Health Professions Alliance (CHPA) the membership expressed the view that the composition of the CACH should be reviewed to allow for a representation of the CHPA on the committee while maintaining the rotational representation of the specific professional bodies. A formal request has been submitted to the committee. For the subsequent CHMM in May 2011, the CACH recommended the theme “Non Communicable Diseases- Challenges and Prospects of Management”

## **BMA Annual Representative Meetings**

The President, Dr Arulraj honoured the invitation of the British Medical Association and attended the Annual Representative meetings in 2008 and 2009. The secretary Dr Oheneba Owusu-Danso attended in 2010.

While in the UK the President and / or the Secretary always took the opportunity to hold discussions with officials of the Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth Secretariat on areas of collaboration and development of the CMA secretariat.

The President and the Secretary also held various meetings with the chairman of the BMA council and Dr Vivian Nathanson chairperson of the BMA international committee to express CMA’s appreciation for the continuous support that the CMA receives from the BMA.

## **Rwanda Medical Association applies for membership**

The Rwanda Medical Association applied for membership of the CMA. The application which was received in September 2010 has received initial endorsement of the

Executive pending approval by the Council. It is worth noting that in November 2009 Rwanda was admitted as the 54<sup>th</sup> member of the Commonwealth at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

### **22<sup>nd</sup> Triennial Meeting**

The President and the Secretary have been in constant touch with the Medical Association of Malta to ensure a successful Triennial Meeting. In May this year Dr Gordon Caruana-Dingli then secretary of the MAM and the nominee for the CMA presidency met with the President and Secretary in London to deliberate on the organization and programming for the triennial conference. It has been a hectic and satisfying work and it is hoped the preparations will yield a conference to meet the expectation of all participants.

### **Elections 2010**

At the close of nominations in June 2010 the following nominations were received. The nominations have been circulated in line with the constitutional provisions.

<b>POSITION</b>	<b>NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION</b>	<b>NAME</b>
President	Medical Association of Malta	Dr. Gordon Caruana-Dingli
Secretary	Ghana Medical Association	Dr. Oheneba Owusu-Danso
	Nigerian Medical Association	Dr. Piwuna Christopher Goson
Vice President, Central Asian	Sri-Lanka Medical Association	Dr. Lalitha Neelangani Mendis
Vice President, West African	Ghana Medical Association	Dr. Kwabena Opoku-Adusei
	Sierra Leone Medical and Dental Association	Dr. Amara Jambai
Vice President, Canadian/Caribbean	Trinidad & Tobago Medical Association	Dr. Solaiman Juman

Vice President, European	Medical Association of Malta	Dr. John Paul Tabone
Vice President, European	British Medical Association	Prof. Vivienne Nathanson
Vice President Central, Eastern and Southern African	Uganda Medical Association	Dr. Ute Jenifer Kavuma
Vice President Central, Eastern and Southern African	South African Medical Association	Dr. Mphata Norman Mabasa
Vice President, South East Asian and Australia	Malaysian Medical Association	Dr. David Quek Kwang Leng

### **Conclusion**

The CMA has made remarkable improvement in its strategic planning, as well as civil society engagements over the period under review. In terms of its structural and strategic involvement in international programmes there is no doubt that the establishment of a functional secretariat has been very beneficial.