

EFNS – European Federation of Neurological Societies

4th Regional Teaching Course in Sub-Saharan Africa

Yaoundé, Cameroon (7 – 9 July, 2011)

Report:

EFNS takes its African project ahead and the 2011 Regional Teaching Course (RTC), the fourth of its kind, took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon hosted by the University of Yaoundé I. The RTC was co-sponsored by IBRO – International Brain Research Organisation and the WFN – World Federation of Neurology. Also this year the RTC went very well and the enthusiasm of the attendants was extremely positive and stimulating.

Prof. Muna, Head of department of internal medicine and specialities of the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (FMBS) of the University of Yaoundé 1, hosted the dinner for faculty and trainees. The dinner was also attended by the Prime Minister of Cameroon, Mr Yang Philemon who expressed his great interest in the RTC and EFNS' work with young neurologists in training.

The themes addressed during the 2011 RTC are **Spinal Cord Pathologies** and **Stroke in the Young**.

Day one was dedicated to the Spinal Cord Pathologies.

Prof. I. Berry (France) gave a general overview of spinal cord pathologies and neuroimaging followed by data on these pathologies in Africa, presented by Prof. A.K. Njamnshi (Cameroon).

Prof. N. Boukhrissi (Morocco) addressed infectious spondylodiscitis in Africa while Dr P. Ongolo (Cameroon) lectured on the neuroimaging technologies available in Africa.

Prof. E. Schmutzhard (Austria) who chaired the session addressed infectious myelopathies.

Day two was dedicated to Stroke in the Young.

A general overview and introduction was given by Prof. G.L. Lenzi (Italy). African data on the incidence of stroke in the young were presented by Prof. A. Gallo Diop (Senegal) while the use of neuroimaging was introduced by Dr. Th. Adoukonou of Benin.

Prof. M. Barnes (UK) illustrated the importance and cost-effectiveness of neuro-rehabilitation in stroke while Prof. G.L. Lenzi stressed the need for stroke prevention especially in the young.

Prof. P. Ongolo of Cameroon presented an overview of the African neuroradiological museum. An interesting presentation on how African radiology lives up to its expectations in spite of the sometimes limited availability of technical equipment.

As always, the open discussion time resulted too short as many questions were raised.

A special hands-on course was organised by Wiley on the evening of day two. Gavin and Christine Sharrock outlined the challenges and difficulties that can be met when submitting a scientific publication. Solutions to each challenge were suggested and the participants took actively part in the interactive course. The wish to have this kind of course included also in the future RTCs was clearly expressed.

A “Your Questions” box was placed in the meeting room and students and attendants were invited to post their questions on whichever subject they wanted to address. The questions were given to the faculty members according to their specialty well in time so that answers could be prepared for the open session on Saturday morning. The discussion was very animated and here too, time resulted too little.

Thanks also to the contribution of IBRO and WFN, a major number of trainees could be invited to the RTC. 22 trainees representing 16 Sub-Saharan countries attended this 4th RTC.

Several very positive reactions were received from the trainees as well as from the faculty following the RTC:

“It was an absolute privilege for me to have been part of this RTC. I am really grateful to the organisers, the faculty and to all the students, for all the knowledge, fun and encouragement that were shared at this conference. I am convinced that it was a landmark event. Our responsibility now, is to make the investment pay!” Ignace Hakizima (Rwanda) - trainee

“It was a marvellous experience. I've learnt from you in the way you cannot possibly imagine.” Meron Gebrewold (Ethiopia) - trainee

“I believe the students would have stayed as long as the faculty wanted them to or until we really worn out on both Thursday and Friday. This speaks of the enthusiasm and dedication of the delightful (always smiling) trainees! “Raj Kalaria (IBRO)

“This was the first Teaching Course that I had attended and I just wanted to say that I thought the whole experience was extremely worthwhile. There was a wide attendance from Sub-Saharan Africa and it really was a very enthusiastic and keen audience. I do hope that this EFNS initiative will be carried forward in the new EFNS/ENS organisation in due course.” Michael Barnes, EFNS

“ Thank you for this experience that deeply moved my soul, giving to me the chance to touch directly how Africa is in deep need of education and culture and support from Europe, how this is difficult to achieve but absolutely mandatory. “ Gian Luigi Lenzi, EFNS

The planning of the 2012 RTC has already started and news on its venue and topics will follow.

JM. Vallat, E. Sipido – July 2011