World Largest Malaria Conference Comes to Nairobi

The 5th Multilateral Initiative on Malaria Pan-African Malaria conference (MIM-PAMC) will be held at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) in Nairobi, Kenya from November 2nd to 6th 2009. The MIM-PAMC is the largest conference in the world dedicated to malaria. It is expected to attract more than 3000 delegates representing researchers and malaria control experts from endemic countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean as well as scientists from leading research institutions and Universities, administrators and representatives from private foundations, government representatives, international agencies and non-governmental organizations drawn from all corners of the world. The Conference will be hosted by the Kenyan Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and a lot of groundwork has been covered to make this conference a big success. The theme of the conference is “Building Knowledge for Action”, which is a
timely and appropriate clarion call to allow sharing of current knowledge and experiences that will be useful in implementing the next crucial steps in the fight and eventual eradication of malaria.

Malaria is a leading cause of sickness and death in many parts of the world. The malaria burden and its adverse effects are most felt by young children and pregnant women in sub-Saharan Africa. As in other areas where it is endemic, malaria in Kenya exacts its toll not only in terms of medical, financial and emotional pain but also has a macroeconomic impact. Every year, Kenya loses 30,000 children to malaria infection (4 children per hour). Malaria accounts for 30% of outpatient attendance and 19% of all admissions in our health facilities placing a heavy burden on the health care system.

Each year, an estimated 170 million working days are lost due to malaria, resulting in significant loses to the economy. Despite these grim statistics, all is not lost and there are massive efforts that have been implemented to reverse the tide of this historical scourge. These involve the use of available and proven tools such as Long-Lasting Insecticide-Treated Bednets (LLITNs), effective antimalarial drugs consisting of artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACTs) and indoor residual spraying (IRS). These efforts have yielded dividends and there is already evidence that malaria can indeed be effectively reduced to levels that it is no longer a public health problem. This has renewed optimism among malariologists and public health officials that malaria can indeed be eliminated from certain regions with possibilities of global eradication.

It is against this background that the premier malaria conference will be held. The MIM-PAMC conference is held in turns in different African countries. The Conference was first held in Dakar, Senegal in 1997, 1999 in Durban, South Africa, 2002 in Arusha, Tanzania and 2005 Yaoundé, Cameroon in. This year, it is the turn of Kenya to showcase to the world its contributions to malaria research, unsurpassed Kenyan hospitality and its beautiful and famous tourist attractions.

The 2009 MIM-PAMC Conference will present the most recent and cutting-edge malaria information covering the following areas; Parasite biology, Vector biology and control, Antimalarial drugs, Malaria vaccines, Immunology, Malaria epidemiology, Case management and control, Research capacity strengthening, Health research ethics, Health systems research and Socio-economic aspects. Podium presentations will be structured into plenary sessions, roundtable panel discussions and parallel sessions, with the location and timing coordinated to optimize access to thematically-related topics. Keynote speakers will include world-renowned researchers, Ministers of Health, representative from the African Union and National Malaria Control Programme Officers.
Building Knowledge for Action, but Which Knowledge for Which Action?

Adrian Luty

Crucial questions at a crucial time for the global community of malarialogists. Since the last MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference in Yaounde in 2005, when the ‘e’ words were on few, if any, on participants’ lips, the malaria research community has been presented with a challenge. This, the 5th such MIM Conference, may go some way towards defining whether we, as a community, are equal to that challenge. In other words are we ready, willing and able to tackle elimination, if not eradication, of malaria worldwide? Be in no doubt, the world will be watching and waiting for us to act using our knowledge...

It is in this context that, with the help of colleagues too numerous to mention by name, we have established the programme of plenary talks, parallel sessions, symposia and debate-style controversies that you find here. It is no mean feat to coordinate such an exercise. Thankfully the task of collating, categorizing and, crucially, assessing the ~1000 scientific contributions was a team effort, for which a thousand thanks to all concerned. It is my sincere hope that, while pleasing all the people all the time is clearly impossible, you will all find something both pleasing, interesting and, above all, inspiring during the six days we are together here in Nairobi. My own abiding memory of the 4th PAMC in Yaounde was of the outstanding quality of the science presented by young African researchers. I am very confident that the high standard set then will be surpassed now.

The MIM Secretariat performs multiple tasks, many of which probably pass under most of our radar screens. Fairly or unfairly, I suspect that their performance is judged by the majority on the quality of the Conference that is in reality only a component part of the sum of all their activities. You will all be aware that this is the first Africa-based MIM Secretariat. For me it has been an honour, a privilege and a pleasure to work with them towards the common goal of preparing for you what we are sure will be the biggest and best PAMC yet. For their wholehearted commitment, their determination, and their indomitable African spirit, I congratulate them and commend them to you.

The success of our combined efforts will be determined ultimately by events distant in both time and space. That is because research relies on communication, and communication fosters debate. From debate evolve collaborations, and from collaborations evolve friendships. If you leave Nairobi sufficiently inspired to pursue your research further and can do so with the knowledge that at least one new friend you made during your time here is ready and willing to help, then MIM has succeeded in its mission! Your own mission, in turn, is to communicate your inspiration to others around you. Only then can we be sure of building and sustaining together the capacity Africa needs to help solve Africa’s problems, problems amongst which malaria has loomed too large for too long. The time for action is now!

How BIG is the Conference?

- 1500 delegates expected
- 5 days of deliberations
- 5 plenary sessions, 31 keynote speakers
- 5 controversy sessions, 10 discussants
- 41 MIM scientific sessions

- Over 315 Oral presentations
- Over 540 posters
- 43 symposia
- 70+ exhibitors
- Workshops, meetings, social events
MIM Goodwill Ambassador
Koffi Olomide
Visit to Tanzania

Charles Wanga

Renowned Congolese artiste Koffi Olomide travelled to Tanzania June this year in his first field visit as a Goodwill Ambassador for the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria (MIM) and the Fifth MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference.

Mr Olomide was appointed last year the first Goodwill Ambassador for MIM and has since been promoting the work of MIM and advocating for increased support for malaria research in Africa.

The MIM Ambassador visited the MIM Secretariat in Dar es Salaam and held discussions with the MIM Secretariat Coordinator Prof Francine Ntoumi and Prof Wen Kilama, Managing Trustee for the African Malaria Network Trust (AMANET) and the rest of MIM and AMANET staff. He then visited the Ifakara Health Institute (IHI) Center in Bagamoyo where he was briefed by Dr Shubis Kafuruki on the centre’s research activities, and then taken for a facility tour to witness malaria research in progress.

Speaking at a press conference afterwards, Mr Olomide said “It is important that African research efforts in finding lasting solution to fight this disease that continues to cost Africa so much, both socially and economically are rightly acknowledged.”

Mr. Olomide also paid a courtesy visit to the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) office and held discussions with the COSTECH Director General, Dr Hassan Mshinda. Dr Mshinda is one of the earliest recipients of MIM malaria research capability strengthening grants which empowers African researchers to conduct relevant research for tackling the malaria challenge.

In the build-up to the conference in November, Mr Olomide has been promoting awareness of this event by increasing the visibility of this forum which provides unique opportunities for malaria scientists, policy makers, funding partners and other stakeholders to meet and exchange ideas, form scientific collaborations and partnerships.

“It is important that African research efforts in finding lasting solution to fight this disease that continues to cost Africa so much, both socially and economically are rightly acknowledged.”

Koffi Olomide, MIM Goodwill Ambassador

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