



The African Organization for Research and Training in Cancer

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Elsewhere in this issue, Mohammed and colleagues describe the African Organization for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC). This all-volunteer nongovernmental organization has a 30-year history of idealism transformed into action. Its accomplishments, although still a work in progress, are meaningful. The challenges are many in a massive continent of 55 nations with major deficits in personnel, education, transportation, resources, stable governments, and economic organization.

The AORTIC conferences, held every second year, provide a venue in which the U.S. National Cancer Institute, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the Union Internationale Contre le Cancer, the World Health Organization, the American Association for Cancer Research, the American Cancer Society, the American Society of Clinical Oncology, the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer, universities, and major international pharmaceutical firms can focus their financial and intellectual participation in the African effort. Africans have an opportunity to present their work and to create friendships with fellow Africans and with foreigners. Emphasis is placed on diseases that are prominent in African nations.

Training courses in surgical techniques and medical oncology have been sponsored independently and collaboratively in several regions in Africa. Education, training, and advocacy for palliative care have been undertaken. Telemedicine training in cervical cancer has extended competence against this important disease in Africa.

Because the ratio of medical and nursing personnel to patient load is woefully inadequate, AORTIC has conducted innovative trials in cancer diagnosis and delivery of care by nonprofessionals. In addition,

AORTIC has begun to inform African political leaders of the present crisis and the impending deluge of patients. As sanitation, perinatal care, nutrition, and control of infectious diseases improve, more people will survive into their senior years. Based solely on an aging population, let alone the adoption of the unhealthy habits of the more developed world, including tobacco, the cancer burden will inexorably increase sharply in coming decades, overwhelming current resources.

Inviting the participation of physicians, scientists, nurses, government officials, foundations, and philanthropists, AORTIC welcomes all who can and will help in this noble enterprise. Some cancers elude prevention or cure in the world's most advanced cultures. However, there is no acceptable basis on which Africans should suffer and die from those cancers that the developed world knows how to prevent or cure. Such a continental disparity is ethically intolerable. The ultimate goal of AORTIC is to establish in Africa the capacity to achieve world-equivalent competence by Africans for Africans. The interim efforts by the developed world are necessary to reach that goal as early as possible. Those who would like to participate can engage at <http://www.AORTIC-Africa.org>.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The author has no financial conflicts of interest to declare.

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