



SHORT COMMUNICATION

Building national capacity for cardiovascular disease prevention in low–medium income countries: The Nigerian Heart Foundation experience

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Leadership at the national level is fundamental to a sustainable system for promoting cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention in a population [1]. With the main aim of building national capacity for CVD prevention in Nigeria; a National Workshop on CVD prevention in Nigeria was held from July 17 to 28, 2005 in Ada (Osun State) [2–4].

This two-week workshop, an initiative of the Nigerian Heart Foundation was organized jointly with College of Health Sciences, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Osogbo and the University Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine of Lausanne (IUMSP), Switzerland. The workshop gathered 10 participants from 5 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 3 ladies and

7 men. The Nigerian Heart Foundation provided the seed fund and logistic support, the LAUTECH University largely funded the workshop while the University Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine of Lausanne (IUMSP) covered the travel costs of the two Swiss faculty members. The workshop benefited from broad community participation and support, as reflected in the various partners involved from the state government, local government and rural community in the workshop itself, at the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as at other functions organized during the two-week duration of the workshop [5].

The first week of the workshop was dedicated to lectures on CVD epidemiology and methodology. In particular, participants designed and conducted a rapid survey of cardiovascular risk factors in a nearby small town, analyzed the data, and wrote an ad hoc report. They reported the findings back to the local community during a vivid evening gathering attended by a hundred

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participants, including a dozen chiefs of the region. The main task of the second week was for groups to prepare a framework for a comprehensive CVD prevention program in their community. The faculty members came from IUMSP supported by local faculty members from the Nigerian Heart Foundation, College of Health Sciences, LAUTECH and the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan.

The success of this workshop, further emphasizes the need for leadership development, mentorship, and support for practical policy development aimed at implementation of programmes for CVD prevention at the national level. The locally trained staff can then readily return to their primary posts of assignment to initiate, build or strengthen activities focusing on surveillance, prevention and control of CVD [6]. In addition, the training program strengthens the capacity necessary to sustain the country-level action initiated by WHO, WHF and other international organizations [7,8].

At an institutional level, the seed for partnership has been sown between IUMSP (a WHO Collaborating Centre in population-based cardiovascular research and prevention for populations in health transition); College of Health Sciences, LAUTECH and the Nigerian Heart Foundation [9]. The Nigerian Heart Foundation intends to host the workshop yearly so that this learning experience can be extended to more health professionals and benefit all states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Computers, visual aids, a multi-media projector and a photocopier were provided by LAUTECH for the duration of the workshop. The workshop fee, including food, board and accommodation, was \$1000 US per participant for the two-week duration of the workshop. However, being a national workshop, participants were spared the inconvenience of foreign air travel expenses, compared with a similar workshop abroad. Also, several participants were able to have financial support from their employers. The workshop offered the participants the benefit of transferring credits obtained from this workshop for future academic pursuits.

This workshop illustrates several advantages of organizing locally training programs in CVD prevention with regards to effective capacity building. Professionals can meet in their own settings and adapt content and practical work to local situations; local faculties and institutions can be involved; and costs can be contained (the total budget for the two-week workshop was less than \$25,000). These features are likely to effectively



Presentation of situational analysis by a participant to the community attended by Chiefs and local government officials.

strengthen partnership, teamwork and the expertise of local key leaders, while limiting training costs. It is expected that the workshop participants are now better equipped to form national networks to share experiences, advocate for appropriate programs and policies, and become national champions for CVD prevention and control in the country (see Photo).

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