Health Care in Uganda; Past, Present and Future

A joint annual scientific health conference of the 8th annual scientific conference of Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MaKCHS) and 20th Uganda National Association of Community and Occupational Health (UNACOH) annual scientific conference with 11th Dr. Mathew Lukwiya memorial lecture was held from September 26 to 28, 2012 with a theme of “Health Care in Uganda; Past, Present and Future” at Silver Springs Hotel in Kampala, Uganda.

The conference was attended by over 200 participants from the different parts of Uganda. In addition representatives from the WHO regional Office Dr. Matshidisho Moeti Deputy Regional Director/World Health Organization (WHO) African Regional Office (AFRO), African Federation of Public Health Association (AFPHA) Dr. Flavia Senkubuge Vice President of AFPHA and World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) Dr. Mengistu Asnake Vice President/President Elect WFPHA attended the conference as invited guests of UNACHO.

The first day was dedicated for the major theme of the conference related to health professionals’ education by looking at the historical perspective, the current situation, the future directions and retention of health professionals. Different public health professionals presented under each thematic area followed by a discussion by expert panelist in each of the topic areas.
The second day morning was dedicated for the Dr. Mathew Lukwiya memorial lecture. Dr. Lukwiya died of Ebola virus infection while he was fighting the epidemic in December 2000. While being treated in the isolation ward and before his death Dr. Lukwiya said that, “I am going to die now. I pray that no one would ever have to die of this disease again.” Recognizing the commitment of Dr. Lukwiya and other health workers who sacrifice their lives while serving others, UNACOH, in collaboration with WHO started the first Dr. Mathew Lukwiya Memorial Lecture in 2002. These lectures have become an annual event and are meant to commemorate those selfless health workers who lost their life while in the line of duty. The 2012 lecture was on “Prevention and Control of Health Care Associated Infections: A Key Health Systems Challenge”, delivered by Dr. Matshidisho Moeti Deputy Regional Director/WHO AFRO. In addition to the memorial lecture remarks were given by the Vice president of WFPHA and a key note address was given by the guest of honor Honorable Dr. Christine Ondoa Minister of Health for the Republic of Uganda. In the key note address the Honorable minister emphasized the achievements, challenges and the way forward in the performance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in Uganda. The honorable minister further noted that the conference is a very special one since it is happening one week before Uganda celebrates 50 years of the country’s independence.

Following the memorial lecture the Honorable Minster officially launched the exhibition and poster sessions of the conference. In addition several papers with public health significance were presented in concurrent sessions during the three days of the conference.
The Honorable Minister with WHO Deputy Regional Director, UNACHO president, WFPHA vice president, AFPHA vice president and families of Dr. Mathew Lukwiya

UNACOH’s Silver Jubilee Celebration
As part of the conference UNACOHO celebrated 25 years (Silver Jubilee) of its establishment in the presence of WFPHA representative as a guest of honor. Since 1993 UNACOH held its scientific conference annually without interruption and in the last three years jointly with the Makerere College of Health Sciences. During the celebration Congratulatory messages were forwarded from the different UNACOH partners and recognitions were given to individuals and organizations who contributed to the growth of the association.

Drs. Deo Sekimpi (UNACHO), Falvia Sekubuge(AFPHA) and Mengistu Asnake(WFPHA)
during the conference

The attendance of WFPHA and AFPHA representatives in the 20th scientific conference and the 25th anniversary of UNACOH was a great opportunity to
express the solidarity with member national public health associations and to learn firsthand from the different activities in the ground.