
MEDICAL PHYSICS ORGANISATIONS

IOMP PROJECT SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL PHYSICS IN AFRICA IN COLLABORATION WITH IAEA & WHO

On behalf of the IOMP Working Group for MP development in Africa: S. Tabakov 1

¹ IOMP Vice-President, King's College London, UK

Abstract— IOMP begins a large new project, together with its Regional Organisation FAMPO, aiming support for the professional development of Medical Physics in the African continent. The paper presents a brief status of the initial stages of the project and the activities of its Working Group: Prof. Fridtjof Nuesslin, Dr K Y Cheung, Dr Madan Rehani, Dr Raymond Wu, Dr John Damilakis, Ms Rebecca Nakatudde, Dr Taofeeq Ige, Dr Ahmed Ibn Seddick and Dr Slavik Tabakov (Chair).

One of the recent priorities of the International Organization for Medical Physics (IOMP) is the development of medical physics in Africa. This is in connection with the increased need of specialists dealing with various aspects of medical technology in healthcare in Africa – ranging from radiation safety of patients to effective and safe use of medical equipment.

IOMP assisted the formation in 2009 of the Federation of African Medical Physics Organizations (FAMPO) – an IOMP Regional Organisation - which currently includes the National Societies of: Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. FAMPO has about 350 medical physicists (2/3 of these being in Radiotherapy). In parallel, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other Institutions, as the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM), the UK Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM), the German Society for Medical Physics (DGMP) and others, also assist various regional projects in Africa.

During 2012 IOMP started a large project for medical physics development in Africa, which aims to develop and implement various types of training, educational & qualification measures, professional infrastructure and partnerships, and also to sync existing activities in the field. The first step was to secure financial support for the organisation of a dedicated Workshop “Medical Physics in Africa – status and way forward”, satellite to the International Conference on Medical Physics ICMP2013

(Brighton, UK). Support was kindly provided by the International Union for Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP). Additionally IAEA and WHO funded some participants from Africa to attend this Workshop. The Workshop on 1/09/2013 was co-organised by IOMP and FAMPO officers and attracted about 100 colleagues from various countries (including colleagues from 11 African countries). The Workshop included presentations from Nigeria, Morocco, Uganda, Egypt, Ghana, South Africa, FAMPO, IOMP, IAEA and WHO. The presentations included also survey of medical physics in various African countries (see the next paper in this Journal) and triggered a number of discussions. The materials from the Workshop are now being collected for inclusion in the part II of e-book *Medical Physics & Engineering Education and Training*.

At the following Round Table “Medical Physics Development in Africa” (3/09/2013), another event satellite to ICMP, Brighton, the discussions were transferred into decisions for the way forward. Twenty senior officers of IOMP, FAMPO, IAEA, WHO, AAPM and IPEM took part in the open discussion, observed by a number of colleagues from other countries. An initial plan for action was agreed including the following parts and tasks:

1. Immediate tasks

- Increasing the visibility of medical physicists in Africa through publishing articles in the local and international press. The articles aim to inform the authorities of the countries about the inclusion of medical physicists as a unique professional group in the International Labour Organisation (ILO, Geneva) official list of professions in the world – the International Standard of Classification Occupations (ICSO 08), approved by the United Nations and published in Geneva during 2012;

- Facilitate the celebration in various countries of Africa of the International Day of Medical Physics on 7 November (the birthday of Marie Curie).

2. Short term tasks

- Collect all presentations from the Workshop as full papers for inclusion in the new e-book and plan its dissemination;

- Present the status and tasks from the Workshop in Brighton at the WHO 2nd Global Forum on Medical Devices, Geneva;

- Identify possible hosts and sponsors for a further activity/workshop on Medical Physics Professional Development in Africa;

- Organise a Tele-conference in Spring 2014 between IOMP, FAMPO and other interested parties to draft a Long-term Plan for Medical Physics Development in Africa.

3. Long term Goals

- Create Specific Working Groups to assist this large long-term project

- Organise a large Workshop on Medical Physics Professional Development in Africa, including sessions related to training for the most urgent areas of Equipment Quality Control and Radiation Safety

- Organise a system for Sync between the activities of all parties interested in assisting the development of medical physics in Africa;

- Assist the development of more educational and training courses on Medical Physics in Africa;

- Plan and execute further tasks for rapid increase of the number of medical physicists and engineers in Africa.

The IOMP/FAMPO Work Group organising the Workshop in Brighton included: Prof. Fridtjof Nuesslin, Dr K Y Cheung, Dr Madan Rehani, Dr Raymond Wu, Dr John Damilakis, Ms Rebecca Nakatudde, Dr Taofeeq Ige, Dr Ahmed Ibn Seddick and Dr Slavik Tabakov (Chair).

The initial steps of this long-term large project included forming networks of interested colleagues and Institutions. Colleagues from King's College Hospital, London were active in this area by organising trips and short courses related to medical equipment management and safety in Uganda and Zimbabwe. A meeting of FAMPO officers and IOMP is planned during the meeting of the African Radiation Oncology Group (AFROG) in Accra, Ghana (April 2014). To sync these activities with the other existing

activities, the meeting in Accra also handles the IAEA RAF6044 & 045 Project Coordinators Meeting. Similar FAMPO – IOMP meeting is planned also as a satellite to the WHO-supported African Regional IRPA Congress in Rabat, Morocco (September 2014).

These activities will continue during the World Congress on Medical Physics and Biomedical Engineering in Toronto, Canada (June 2015) with a large IOMP-WHO-IAEA Workshop, aiming to engage all key players in the field and provide a solid background for the project.

We invite all institutions and colleagues planning to take part in this huge IOMP project to get in touch with the IOMP Working Group in order to sync our plans and increase the effectiveness of the help for the development of medical physics in Africa. In Particular we would appreciate receiving information about various current projects in Africa (aims, partners, stage of development).

The further steps of this project will be presented in the next issues of Medical Physics International.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The IOMP Officers and the Working Group for Medical Physics Development in Africa, including FAMPO Officers, expresses its gratitude to the colleagues and institutions supporting this project – in particular: WHO, IAEA, IUPAP and our large member organisations, such as AAPM, IPPEM, DGMP and others.

Contacts of the corresponding author:

Author: S Tabakov
 Institute: IOMP, also King's College London, UK
 Street: Faraday Building, Denmark Hill
 City: London SE5 9RS
 Country: UK
 Email: slavik.tabakov@emerald2.co.uk



Some of the attendees of the 'African Workshop' and the following Round Table discussion at ICMP 2013, Brighton, UK